

CHAPTER ONE

Conversion: The Priority of the Heart

1.1 Edwards and Augustine on Conversion:

The priority of the heart in religious experience begins with conversion for both Edwards and Augustine, and, despite the intervening centuries, there are some remarkable parallels between their conversion experiences. The most important shared conclusion in their conversion narratives is that conversion takes place in the heart rather than the intellect, although the intellect is not discarded. Conversion for both men entails a defining moment of spiritual illumination. It is an encounter with the triune God of the Bible manifest in an intuitive moment of grace in the heart that forever separates the new way of “seeing” God from all previous attempts to identify religious certitude.

My first task in this chapter is to examine the concept of the “heart” as commonly understood in their respective historical contexts. I then discuss their understanding of “heart” to establish their place in a received tradition of heart-religion. Next, I examine Edwards’ account of his conversion experiences and then compare it with that of Augustine, drawing out similarities and differences in the way in which they finally understood conversion. My analysis of their spiritual autobiographies reveals that both men found that the beatific vision of the beauty of God in the person of Jesus Christ overwhelms the heart, replacing any previous notions of religious truth.

According to one commentator “Augustine is a pioneer in the science of experimental psychology,”¹ an observation that has been applied to Jonathan Edwards.² Nowhere is this observation more pertinent than in their respective spiritual autobiographies which document the pattern of their conversion experiences and locate genuine religious experience in the heart. Edwards recalls his conversion experiences in a short piece entitled the *Personal Narrative*,³ written c. 1740, some fifteen to twenty years after the episodes he recounts. Similarly, the recollections of hindsight provide the materials for Augustine’s *Confessions*, composed c. 396, some ten years after his final

¹ R. L. Ottley, *Studies in the Confessions of St. Augustine*, (London, Robert Scott, 1919), p. 91.

² John Smith, Introduction to *Religious Affections*, *Works*, 2, p. 5. Smith commends Edwards’ “Personal Narrative” as well as the *Religious Affections* as showing “how seriously Edwards took ‘experimental religion’ by which he means the evidence for religious belief garnered from people’s experiences of conversion.

³ “*Personal Narrative*,” in *Letters and Personal Papers*, *Works*, 16, pp. 790-804.

moment of conversion in the garden in Milan. In both cases, the heart's longing for love and truth is the impetus behind the search for God.

Written in the first person, their narratives are models of personal introspection that sharply delineate a "before and after" self. They scrutinize their affections and hearts and discover a new spiritual identity which can give shape and meaning to their lives. All is revealed from a new vantage point, the converted heart, with their testimonies designed both to demonstrate the reality of conversion by grace and to inspire others to emulate their example of worldly renunciation for the love of God. In their comprehensive search for a sense of spiritual identity in relation to God, both come to subordinate personal autonomy to the sovereignty of a triune God of love.

Edwards' spiritual autobiography recapitulates Augustine's rhapsodic images of the sweetness of the divine call and the ardent response of the converted heart. As acute observers of the changed heart which epistomised the real beginning of the Christian life, they jointly espouse the primacy of the heart in the religious life. An aesthetic vision of God is at the centre of their narratives. Language and emotion combine in their attempts to capture what is mysterious, inexplicable and beyond exhaustive definition, the presence of grace in the heart.

One recent biographer suggests that Augustine's conversion narrative is akin to throwing his life to the lions,⁴ but perhaps Augustine's own recollection is nearer the mark. His conversion is a return to his heart where he can cling to God, (*redite, praeuaricatores, ad cor et inhaerete illi*), because that is where God is, although Augustine readily admits his own failings in wandering far from his own heart in the search for truth and love.⁵ Lancel says that Augustine's use of the word "heart" "so often "bursts into his text to designate the moral centre of the human being, simultaneously body and soul, in a sense that is Pascalian before the term was invented."⁶

In this respect, Edwards is related spiritually to both Augustine and Pascal. In all of Edwards' writings on conversion there is a strongly Augustinian flavour in the kind of interpretive pattern he imposes on the movements of his heart. Philip Gura notes that Edwards' conversion was not complete until it had reached his heart,⁷ thus confirming

⁴ Serge Lancel, *St Augustine*, trans. Antonia Nevill, (London: SCM Press, 2002), p. 210

⁵ *Confessions*, IV, 12.18, p. 63. (CCSL. 27, 49).

⁶ Lancel, *St Augustine*, p. 209.

⁷ Philip F. Gura, *Jonathan Edwards: America's Evangelical*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), p. 36.

Edwards' oft-quoted dictum that "if the great things of religion are rightly understood, they will affect the heart."⁸ The same is true for Augustine as my comparison of their conversion experiences reveals.

The experience of God in the heart is a shared passion with their emphasis on the importance of the heart reflected in their cautionary remarks on the necessity for conversion to encompass both head and heart if the spiritual life is to be authentic. So Augustine warns his readers in Book I of *The Trinity* "that my pen is on the watch against the sophistries of those who scorn the starting point of faith, and allow themselves to be deceived through an unseasonable and misguided love of reason."⁹ In a similar vein Edwards observes in the *Religious Affections* that "where there is a kind of light without heat, a head stored with notions and speculations, with a cold and unaffected heart, there can be nothing divine in that light: that knowledge is no true knowledge of divine things."¹⁰

Edwards and Augustine stand in a tradition of archetypal Christian religious conversions which begins with Paul.¹¹ The spiritual awakening that resulted in conversion

⁸ *Religious Affections, Works*, 2, p. 120.

⁹ *The Trinity*, 1.1.1, in WSA, 1/5, p. 65. English quotations from *De Trinitate* are taken from *The Trinity*, trans. by E. Hill, ed. John E. Rotelle, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the Twenty-First Century* 1/5 (New York: New City Press, Paperback, 1991). Hereafter cited as *The Trinity*, WSA, book, chapter and page nos. Latin citations, except where otherwise indicated, are from the edition *Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina*, Vols. 50 and 50A. Hereafter cited as CCSL. Augustine believes that it is by faith that we approach God, and "faith is a matter of mind and heart, not of the physical body." *The City of God*, XXII. 29, p. 1085. (CCSL 48, 860). "Fide quipped acceditur ad Deum, quam cordis constat esse, non corporis."

¹⁰ *Religious Affections, Works*, 2, pp. 49-50.

¹¹ Paula Fredriksen, "Paul and Augustine: Conversion Narratives, Orthodox Traditions, and the Retrospective Self," *Journal of Theological Studies*, ns, vol. 37, 1, (April, 1986), pp. 3-34. In her comparison of Paul's and Augustine's conversion narratives, Paula Fredrikson argues that the historian can only access "the retrospective moment, and the retrospective self" that, in fact, "it is from his vantage point in the present that the convert constructs a narrative that renders the past and present continuous, intelligible, and coherent." She goes on to say that "the seemingly historical account of the conversion narrative serves to reaffirm the tradition which the convert, through this event has joined," and that the conversion account is "both anachronistic and apologetic," a construct which interprets the past climactic moment in the light of the present, and not vice versa. As such, Fredriksen argues that the historian cannot know what actually happened, or what the convert thought or experienced at the time. All is a construct of the literary imagination with a few facts thrown in to legitimate what is essentially a work of fiction. This somewhat bleak view of the historian's attempts to retrieve information in order to construct hypotheses concerning the content and rationale for spiritual autobiography seems overly pessimistic. Of course there will be polemical, even didactic overtones to conversion narratives, but that need not condemn the genre to the realms of fantasy. Although it is impossible to characterize all conversion experiences as coming from the same mould, a number of similarities can be seen in the conversion experiences of Edwards, Luther, Augustine and Paul, to name four of the more famous Christians who have undergone radical conversion experiences. On the continuum of conversion experiences, the most common model is that of a cataclysmic experience of immediate illumination or intuition following a season of inner turmoil and doubt. This is exemplified by Edwards, Luther and Augustine. Paul's conversion experience on the Damascus road differed insofar as it was not preceded by spiritual searching to resolve doubt or indecision. His conversion was characterized by a sudden, completely unexpected, unsought, divine encounter leading to an almost instantaneous re-orientation

for Paul, Augustine and Edwards can be described as the shift in power that occurs in the transference of autonomy from self to God. In the process of the growing self-awareness that is characteristic of the conversion process, ideas of the “self,” or personhood, undergo transformation as one attempts to impose some sort of order on personal experience with respect to the divine initiative in the heart. Conn sees conversion as reframing the structure of the psyche. “Conversion radically redirects and transforms the concrete shape and orientation of personal subjectivity, the structure and content of one’s conscience as character.” This fundamental shift leads to “the person’s radical drive for self-transcendence” and involves “the radical reorientation of one’s entire life that occurs when God is allowed to move from the periphery to the centre of one’s being.”¹² The “centre of one’s being” for both Edwards and Augustine is the heart.

What is noteworthy is that even if their respective spiritual pilgrimages followed different routes, the moment of epiphany in each case was interpreted as the work of a gracious God who had poured out his love and mercy into their hearts.¹³ Romans 5: 5 is a

of heart, mind and will towards a God formerly regarded as false. Prior to his conversion, Paul felt secure in his Jewish identity and actively persecuted the Christians. While Edwards and Luther professed to be Christian, dissatisfaction with their Christian identity was the catalyst for change. Their model of conversion is that of the person who appears to have always been a believer, but who finds that periods of spiritual dryness and seeming indifference to spiritual concerns create an existential anxiety about religious certainty. Augustine, on the other hand, counted himself a failure in the long search for the true God prior to his conversion because he was unable to meet the demand for a renunciation of sex. His story is that of the great sinner who finally experiences a radical change of heart and mind and becomes the great saint.

Like Luther, Edwards and Augustine found their reservations concerning God’s sovereignty resolved once they were able to comprehend the nature and extent of God’s love and beauty.

¹² Walter Conn, *Christian Conversion: A Developmental Interpretation of Autonomy and Surrender*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), pp. 31-33. See also William James, *The Variety of Religious Experience*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 196. As a consequence of this re-direction of loyalties, William James maintains that the new convert finds that “religious ideas, previously peripheral in his consciousness, now take a central place, and that religious aims form the habitual centre of his energy.” Another classic is A. D. Nock, *Conversion* (London: Oxford University Press Paperback, 1933, 1965). Nock refers to conversion as “the reorientation of the soul of an individual, his deliberate turning from indifference or from an earlier form of piety to another, a turning which implies a consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right.” (p. 7).

¹³ As significant figures in church history, the literature on their respective conversion accounts is vast, particularly insofar as Augustine is concerned. There are as many interpretations of the manner and significance of conversion for each man as there are commentaries or articles. A brief scholarly overview of recent research into the *Confessions* is given by Hubertus R. Drobner, “Studying Augustine: An Overview of Recent Research,” in *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honour of Gerald Bonner*, ed. Robert Dodoro and George Lawless (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 20-21. One of the most recent translations of the *Confessions* is *The Confessions*, trans. M. Boulding, in *WSA*, 1/1; James .J. O’Donnell, ed., *Augustine: Confessions*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Henry Chadwick, *Saint Augustine: Confessions: A New Translation* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991). Of all the biographies of Augustine, Peter Brown’s *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, (Faber and Faber, 1967; Reprint, 2000) remains the most compelling. More recently, biographies by James. J. O’ Donnell, *Augustine: Sinner and Saint: A New Biography*, (London: Profile Books, 2005) Serge Lancel, *St Augustine*, and Gary Wills, *Saint Augustine* (New York: Viking Press, 1999) offer contrasting insights. G. Bonner, *St Augustine of Hippo: Life and*

favourite text for both theologians. Believing as they did that God's love had been poured out into their hearts, conversion becomes an overwhelmingly aesthetic experience accompanied by delight, joy and a sense of "sweetness" in the heart. It marks the beginning of a decisive re-orientation of the heart with any previous knowledge about God gleaned from family, the Bible or philosophy deemed to have been insufficient to satisfy the heart's clamour for truth.¹⁴ This new spiritual understanding of God engendered a stunning vision of the beauty and sovereignty of the *Deus cordis mei*, a God whose Trinitarian being becomes the pattern for all human relationships.

The following extracts reveal that the nexus between the two theologians lies in their shared belief in the conversion of the heart by grace which leads to the creation of an intimate bond of affectional union with God. "The converted," says Edwards in a sermon on Matt. 15: 26 preached in 1729, "stand in a very near relation to Jesus Christ, so the relation that in and through him they stand in to God is very near. They ben't only subjects or servants but children. They are his heritage, his chosen peculiar people, he has set them apart for himself and he dwells with them while they are here in this world by dwelling in their hearts by his Spirit and he intends to bring them near to himself hereafter into his immediate presence to see his face and enjoy him forever."¹⁵

Shortly after his conversion Augustine rejoices that where he had formerly been angry with himself because of his past misdemeanors, now his heart is a place where "you began to be my delight, and you gave 'gladness in my heart'."¹⁶ Speaking of the Incarnation, he says to his congregation, "Truth first came to us clad in flesh, and through his flesh healed the inner eye of our hearts, so that we might one day have the strength to see him face to face."¹⁷ The healing of the eye of the heart is the cause of his "heart's joy."¹⁸ It is interesting that in these extracts, both Edwards and Augustine cite enjoyment of

Controversies (Philadelphia, 1963) is an older but still worthwhile introduction to Augustine's life and thought.

Biographies of Edwards are no less impressive. George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Philip Gura, *Jonathan Edwards: America's Evangelical*, pp. 6-7, 18-19, 35-36, 65-67, 74-75, 121-122, 106-107, 234-235, and Iain Murray's *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography*, (Banner of Truth Trust, 1987) offer differing interpretations of Edwards' life and thought. Perry Miller's biography *Jonathan Edwards* (New York, 1949) is still persuasive despite criticisms that he gave too much weight to Edwards' Lockean influences.

¹⁴ "Psalm 36. 14," (2), in *WSA*, III, 16, p. 114.

¹⁵ "The Difference Between the Converted and Unconverted," 1729, Unpublished sermon The Jonathan Edwards Centre, Yale Divinity School, pp. 46-47.

¹⁶ *Confessions*, IX. 4. 11, p. 162.

¹⁷ "Psalm 56. 17," in *WSA*, III/17, p. 119.

¹⁸ "Psalm 53. 8," *ibid.*, p. 49.

God as one outcome of the reconciliation between Creator and creature that conversion inaugurates.¹⁹ Experiencing God in the heart brings joy and happiness. Apart from their overwhelming experience of God in the heart at conversion and the lifelong desire to know more of God engendered by that experience, everything else becomes a footnote.

1.2 The concept of the Heart in the Classical World

From antiquity the meaning of “heart” encompassed a wide semantic range being somewhat of an umbrella term which covered such diverse notions such as feeling, understanding, soul, intellect, volition and character. In the world of ancient Greece, Homer, Hesiod and the tragedians designated the heart as the place of the soul’s life including the affections, the emotions and the feelings.²⁰ Thinking is described as speaking and located in the heart or diaphragm, and thought and feeling are inseparable.²¹ This understanding of *kardia* was favoured by the Epicureans and the Stoics who followed the Hebraic tradition and located intelligence in the heart. The heart was the organ of consciousness.

Although the poets used it more often in a metaphorical sense to denote the centre of the inner life, the classical Greek authors used *kardia* primarily in its physiological sense. Aristotle imbued the heart with the vital functions as well as the emotions and sensation, but did not locate intelligence there, while Plato was part of a weak trend towards viewing the heart as vaguely akin to the soul, which he determined was tripartite.²² On the whole Hellenistic anthropology developed along Aristotelian lines to the point where it attributed more importance to a dualistic view of humanity with the inner life composed of two faculties, the rational and volitional. This perspective elevated the mind as the locus for the inner man and favoured a more physiological view of *kardia*. This emphasis continued

¹⁹ John Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938), p. 109. Burnaby seems to regard enjoyment as a more gentle form of love, hence his comment on Augustine’s understanding of enjoyment. “To enjoy” is to cleave to something in the love which is enjoyment, not by means of the love which is desire.”

²⁰ See the entry on “Heart” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Gen. Ed. Mircea Eliade, Charles L. Adams et al. eds., 16 vols (New York: Macmillan, c. 1987), 6: 234-37.

²¹ R. B. Onians, *The Origins of European Thought About the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time and Fate: New Interpretations of Greek, Roman and Kindred Evidence also of Some Basic Jewish and Christian Beliefs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), pp. 13, 28. Onians analyses the ways in which the ancients associated the organs of the body with aspects of the mind and consciousness. He notes that Homer had two main words for “heart” *ker* and *kradie*.

²² “Kardia” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromily, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich. 1964-76), 3: 605-614, (608). See also Eric Jager, “The Book of the Heart: Reading and Writing the Medieval Subject” in *Speculum*, vol. 71, No. 1, (Jan., 1996), pp. 1-3.

down to the New Testament era when Josephus, as a Greek speaking Jew in a Hellenistic context, dispensed with *kardia* altogether when referring to the “inner man”.

In a Latin-speaking context, Classical Latin more so than the Greeks commonly used *cor* as a synonym for thought, memory, soul and spirit as well as the seat of intelligence, volition and the emotions.²³ Although after Galen, perception and cognition were known to be seated in the brain, the heart was still associated with sensation, imagination, memory and even with the whole soul.²⁴

There is a distinct difference in emphasis between Hebraic and Hellenistic understandings of “heart.”²⁵ In Biblical psychology, the “heart” is the central, vital and unifying organ of the spiritual life. The heart was another aspect of the personality possessed of a percipient dimension which saw the conjunction of the cognitive and volitional aspects of the interior life so closely conjoined as to be indistinguishable.²⁶ The Hebrew Scriptures equated the heart (Hebrew, *leb*, *lebab*; Greek, *kardia*; both translated as Latin *cor*) with the innermost self, at once receptive and active, the locus of the psychological, intellectual and moral life.²⁷ This interpretation combined the seat of mental or spiritual powers and capacities with the rational functions.²⁸ In some instances, “heart” was associated with the soul, (*nephesh*) and was similar to the ancient conception of the diaphragm (*thumos*) or the soul (*animus*) as the seat of consciousness. In most Old Testament references, the “heart” was the innermost spring of individual life, the ultimate source of all its physical, intellectual, emotional, and volitional energies.²⁹ It was also the

²³ *The Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed., P.G. W. Glare, (New York: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1982) s.v. *cor* The Oxford Latin Dictionary includes meanings up to 200AD. See also Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 468. See Onians, *Origins of European Thought*, p. 40. Onians identifies a link between soul (*animus*), breath and consciousness in ancient Roman philosophy. Consciousness with all the variations of emotion and thought is a matter of *animus*. Thoughts and words were “breath”, *animus*, from the *cor* and *praecordia*. (171-172).

²⁴ See Robert C. Dentan, “Heart” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of The Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick et al., 5 vols., (New York, 1962), 2: 549-550; David G. Burke, “Heart,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley et al., 4 vols., rev. edition, (Grand Rapids, 1982) 2: 549-550.

²⁵ Robert Jewett, *Paul’s Anthropological Terms: A Study of Their Use in Conflict Settings*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), p. 308.

²⁶ See the entry on “*kardia*,” in Jewett, *Paul’s Anthropological Terms*, pp. 305-333. Brad Walton, *Jonathan Edwards, Religious Affections and the Puritan Analysis of True Piety, Spiritual Sensation and Heart Religion*, Studies in American Religion, vol. 74, (Lewiston: The Edward Mellon Press, 2002), p. 166.

²⁷ See “Heart” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, p. 235.

²⁸ Jewett, *Paul’s Anthropological Terms*, p. 305. “It was the seat of feeling and will, as well as the receptive centre for knowledge and revelation.”

²⁹ H. J. Fabri; “*Leb*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 7, eds. C.J. Botterweek, H. Ringgren and J.J. Fabri; trans. David Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), p. 412. The heart “functions in all dimensions of human existence, and is used as a term for all the aspects of a person, vital, affective, noetic and voluntative.”

meeting place for the human and divine in a person's life. Religious and moral conduct stems from the heart, but it is also the seat of rational functions.³⁰ Such views carried over to the New Testament and are to be found in Paul's letters.

New Testament usage is congruent with that of the Old Testament as distinct from Greek usage. It is the main organ of psychic and spiritual life, the place in man where God bears witness to himself. As the paramount organ of the body, it was the source and seat of all the activities and functions of the soul and spirit.³¹ One other use of "heart" that has some bearing on Augustine's understanding of it, is that of Paul. *Kardia* in Paul's usage stands for "the whole of the inner being of man in contrast to his external side."³² The self is an integrated whole and the *kardia*, the "integrating centre of man as a rational, emotional, volitional being."³³ The heart in Pauline anthropology may be enlightened (Eph 1:18); it may experience fear (2 Cor 2:4), and it is from the heart that one obeys God (Rom 6:17). Both Edwards and Augustine inherited the Hebraic notion of "heart" that gave weight to perception, affect and volition in its usage.

1.3 The Concept of the "Heart" in the Age of Enlightenment

After the Reformation and following the emerging climate of humanistic rationalism inspired by the Enlightenment some of the emphasis on the heart as the locus for the spiritual life gave way to a concentration on the mind or reason as the way to understand religious belief. A new mood of secularism and the championing of reason in the face of developments in mathematics and science during the seventeenth century saw a diminution of the importance of affectivity in religious belief in some parts of the church and in the wider society. Newton and Locke, without minimizing the importance of belief, made it more a matter of rational proof than of the assent of the heart. Reason could resolve all mysteries and difficulties in religion as Locke demonstrated in *The Reasonableness of Christianity*. The subsequent rise of Deism added to the move away from a belief in revelation that culminated in John Toland's *Christianity Not Mystrious* of 1696. From a theological perspective, Samuel Clarke's 1704-1705 Boyer Lectures seemed to confirm Locke's opinion that revelation merely confirmed what reason taught, that Christian belief

³⁰ F. Baumgarten and J. Behm, "kardia" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3: 606-607.

³¹ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, pp. 611-613.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 612. See also J.K. Chamberlin, "Psychology," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne et al. (Downers Grove, IVP Press, 1993), pp. 765-775.

³³ J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), p. 100.

was eminently rational and for that reason, far surpassed all other belief systems whether ancient or modern.³⁴

However, concurrent with the rise of rationalism was the continuance of a tradition of heart-religion going back to the Hebrew Scriptures. The semi-mystical strain in Christianity which emphasized the importance of the heart in knowing God was sustained and found expression in the monasteries and continued during the Reformation period. Bernard of Clairveaux and William of St. Thierry favoured the uniting of affect, cognition and voluntarism in the contemplation of God, while Melancthon and Calvin both revived Augustine's heart language, as did Suarez and Keckermann. Calvin spoke of the *sensus divinitatis* or the *sensus suavitatis* which could be felt in the believer's heart,³⁵ and his work was certainly available to Edwards.

Nowhere did the heart receive more attention than in Puritan psychology, and many of Edwards' Puritan predecessors used heart-language to emphasise the affective nature of religious discernment. The "heart" when compared with the "whole soul" was seen not as a collection of faculties but as the foundational inclination or bias of the soul, the spring of all action. When connected with the will in Puritan psychology the heart is often referred to as the inclination, bias, bent, weight, propensity or disposition of the personality. Sometimes "The heart is put for the whole soul," says Richard Sibbes, one of Edwards' oft quoted Puritan predecessors,³⁶ a view with which John Owen concurs: "the heart in Scripture is taken for the whole rational soul."³⁷ It encompasses more than just the volitional aspect of the mind as John Owen's comment reveals. "Generally," wrote Owen, "it [i.e. the heart] denotes the whole soul of man and all the faculties of it, not absolutely, but as they are all

³⁴ Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Reprint, 1979), pp. 10-13. Gerald R. Cragg, *The Church in an Age of Reason, 1648-1789*, Pelican History of the Church Reprint (Great Britain, 1972) Ch. 3 "The New Age and its Thought: 1648-1715," pp. 37-49; Ch. 5, "The Watershed in English Thought: 1660-1714," pp. 65-80; Ch. 11, "England: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of Reason," pp. 157-173.

³⁵ John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III, 2.15, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, Reprint, 2001), p. 483. "This assurance we cannot have without truly perceiving its sweetness, and experiencing it in ourselves." See also Terrence Erdt, "The Calvinist Psychology of the Heart," Ch. I in *Jonathan Edwards: Art and the Sense of the Heart* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), pp. 1-20.

³⁶ *The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes* ed. Alexander Grosart, vol. VI, (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1862), p. 525.

³⁷ *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold, vol. III, (London and Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter 1852), p. 326.

one principle of moral operations, as they all concur in doing good and evil.”³⁸ In this case, the heart has a unitive capacity in regulating behaviour.

Conversion in Owen’s theology is “spiritual mindedness” involving “the inclination, disposition, and frame of the mind, in all its affections, whereby it adheres and cleaves unto spiritual things.”³⁹ Sibbes gave precedence to the heart over the intellect in conversion insisting that the heart must be “circumcised,” “sanctified,” or “opened...then it attends.”⁴⁰ The Puritans did not see conversion as a new faculty in the mind, but a new spring, or principle or habit which re-oriented the faculties to a new understanding of spiritual things. “There is a spring of better thoughts, of better desires, of better aims in him [the new saint] than in other men,” Sibbes noted.⁴¹

Many Puritans conceived of the “heart” as more than the will in contradistinction to the intellect. In their thinking, the “heart” is the inclinational bias that underpins and unifies cognitive and affective acts. As such it is the whole soul seen in its totality but governed by its fundamental, affective inclination. It was Sibbes who alludes to Augustine’s *The City of God* in his observation that “Our affections will tell us of what city we are, whether of Jerusalem or Babylon, as one of the ancients well said...Doth earthly love as a weight press down to things below, or is it a sanctified love, which carries thee to Christ and to the things of God?”⁴²

The concept of the “heart” as the integrating principle of the personality proved to be a useful buffer against the secularists who despised religion and the Arminians who elevated reason over the affections. Their arguments for a more rational approach to intellectual enquiry in religion were countered by Edwards who championed the central role of the heart in his exposition of true religion and its indicators in the *Religious Affections*.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. VI, p. 170.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. VII, p. 270.

⁴⁰ Sibbes, *Complete Works*, vol. VI, p. 525.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 14.

⁴² *Ibid.*, vol. IV, pp. 101-102.

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1.4 The Psychology of the “Heart” in Edwards’ Theology

Paul Ramsay notes the importance of the heart as the central unity of the self in his introduction to Edwards’ *Religious Affections*.⁴³ Edwards stands in the tradition of heart religion that goes back to the Hebrew Scriptures. He shares with Augustine the view that the heart is the seat of affectivity and the will, but examines its role in conversion in a more systematic way than does Augustine.

His extensive analysis of the place of the heart in conversion is set within the context of contentious religious revival criticized for its excessive emotional outbursts. Edwards is anxious to legitimate the role of the affections in conversion and the Christian life against critics who favoured a more restrained approach to conversion than that advocated by the enthusiasts. In spite of his critics, Edwards maintained that it is not the mind alone that knows conversion but the heart is very much involved too. The heart as the will and the affections is of special theological significance for Edwards in the context of regeneration. All is in the disposition or inclination of the heart. Without a change in the fundamental disposition of the heart conversion does not happen. In his *Images or Shadows of Divine Things*, he compares conversion to the conception of an animal, claiming that just as the heart is first to appear in the embryo, so does

an new heart, a new sense and inclination that is a principle of new life, a principle that, however small, is active and has vigour and power and as it more beats and struggles, thirsts after holiness, aims at and tends to everything that belong to the new creature, and has within it the foundation and source of the whole.⁴⁴

As with Augustine’s understanding of “heart,” Edwards’ definition is multivalent, encompassing perception, judgment, and the affective component of the inner life. By the affections Edwards meant feelings or emotions (although emotions is not a word he would have used). Those feelings associated with approving and liking include love, desire, joy, gratitude and complacency, while those tending towards disapproval or rejection include hate, sadness, fear or grief.⁴⁵ Edwards’ most extensive statement about the heart and the

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-16.

⁴⁴ “Images and Shadows of Divine Things,” no. 190, in *Typological Writings, Works*, 11, pp. 122-123.

⁴⁵ *Religious Affections, Works*, 2, p. 98.

affections is found in the *Religious Affections* (1746) where he analyses the distinguishing marks of the truly converted heart in an attempt to distinguish between authentic religious affections and the spurious emotionalism of some revivalists. In this work he associates the mind with the heart⁴⁶ and defines the “heart” in conjunction with the affections and the faculties of understanding and will. He writes:

...the affections are no other, than the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul” [i.e. the heart]. God has indued the soul with two faculties: one is that by which it is capable of perception and speculation, or by which it discerns and views and judges of things; which is called the understanding. The other faculty is that by which the soul does not merely perceive and view things, but in some way [is] inclined with respect to the things it views or considers; either is inclined to them or is disinclined to, and averse from them; or is the faculty by which the soul does not behold things, as an indifferent unaffected spectator, but either as liking or disliking, pleased or displeased, approving or rejecting. This faculty is called by various names: it is sometimes called the inclination: and as it has respect to the actions that are determined and governed by it, is called the will: and the mind, with regard to the exercises of this faculty, is often called the heart.⁴⁷

Edwards’ model of the inner life construes the heart as incorporating perception and volition: the understanding, the will and the affections interact in the exercise of the faculty he denotes as both the heart and the mind. However, Edwards does not regard these distinctions as autonomous faculties. Understanding and will are not so much properties of the mind as the person acting with respect to reality. They are not to be separated, since it is not understanding or will, but the self which encounters reality.⁴⁸ The “affections” are the “more vigorous and sensible exercises” of inclination through the mind. Soul/heart and sometimes mind, are virtually interchangeable in Edwards’ lexicon.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 113. Spiritual knowledge of God consists of “a new sense of the heart,” for “the heart is the proper subject of it, or the soul as a being that not only beholds, but has inclination, and is pleased or displeased.” Spiritual sensibility involves the unity of understanding and love for it consists in “a sensation of the mind which loves and rejoices.”

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 272. “nor can there be a clear distinction made between the two faculties of understanding and will, as acting distinctly and separately, in this matter.”

⁴⁹ “The Value of Salvation,” in *Sermons and Discourses, Works*, 10, p. 326-327. “So the word “*lebh*,” “heart” no less properly signifies the “soul,” especially with regard to the will and affections.” That the heart is the locus for God’s activity in the human and is often associated with the soul is found throughout Edwards’ writings. The all-encompassing nature of the soul and its pre-eminence over the body is clearly evident in Edwards’ words to his New York congregation at the beginning of his public ministry sometime between August 1722 and May 1723: “The soul is in effect the man, and the body without it is no more than a stick or a stone. ‘Tis the soul that thinks, that perceives pleasure, that enjoys good...” In this instance the soul appears

The “mind” in Edwards thinking does not refer simply to the cognitive and speculative aspect of the soul. The mind is the seat of the affections because the inclination of the heart involves both the will and the mind. The mind has “thoughts”⁵⁰ but it is also the “proper seat”⁵¹ of the affections. It “loves and rejoices”⁵² and is the subject of both the intellectual and affective dimensions of the personality. “The mind don’t only speculate and behold, but relishes and feels.”⁵³ In much of his writing, the “heart” is regarded as the totality of the mind in its inclinational aspect. It is identified with the fundamental amative orientation and is behind every single act of perception and volition. At times it is used interchangeably with the will or perception and sensation.

Like Augustine, Edwards separates the affections and passions of the heart. Affection has a more “extensive” usage than passion, “being used for all vigorous lively actings of the will or inclination.” “Passion” he asserts, by way of comparison, is used for affections that are “more sudden, and whose effects on the animal spirits are more violent, and the mind more overpowered, and less in its own command.”⁵⁴ The “religious affections” as opposed to ordinary affections, consist of love and joy in Christ. They are experienced in the heart and incline the whole of the mind, understanding and will towards the love of the divine glory.⁵⁵

It is clear that his notion of “heart” does not include purely “speculative” or “notional” acts of the understanding since these do not have an affective component, being mainly empirical. While the understanding is not to be ignored, it must include an effective response in the heart for true conversion because “no light in the understanding is good,

to incorporate the understanding and the affections. The business of life, according to Edwards, is to seek salvation by casting the soul onto the mercy of a sovereign God who “sent his own son into the world to die for the sake of the salvation of the soul of man.” Similarly in Miscellany 27b, “Conversion,” *Works*, 13, 213. “’Tis most certain, both from Scripture and reason, that there must be a reception of Christ with the faculties of the soul in order to salvation by him, and that in this reception there is a believing of what we are taught in the gospel concerning him and salvation by him, and that it must be a consent of the will or an agreeableness between the disposition of the soul and those doctrines; so that the disposition is all that can be said to be absolutely necessary.” In another sermon, heart appears in one line and soul in the next: “The Holy Ghost influences the souls of believers as an indwelling principle. Not [that] the Holy Ghost not moves upon the hearts of saints as an external agent, but he takes up his abode in the hearts of believers.” Sermon on John 16:8, in *Sermons and Discourses*, (1723-1729), *Works*, 14, p. 384.

⁵⁰ *Religious Affections*, *Works*, 2, p. 119.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 98

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁵⁵ See Paul Ramsay, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *Religious Affections*, *Works*, 2, pp.11-16.

which don't produce holy affection in the heart."⁵⁶ The great importance of feelings or affections in Edwards' use of the heart in his theology is related to his notion of holiness for "true virtue or holiness has its seat in the heart, rather than in the head." He continues, "The things of religion take place in men's hearts, no further than they are affected with them. The informing of the understanding is all vain, any farther than it affects the heart."⁵⁷

Edwards is adamant that true religion is a matter of the heart which involves the mind, the inclination of the will and the affections acting together. He is entirely opposed to a polarized view of Christianity which is seen at one end of the spectrum to be a matter of speculative philosophy or mere moralism, or at the other end, nothing but an emotional enthusiasm. Each one of these positions was mistakenly seen as a sign of true religion in his context of revivalism in Northampton, Massachusetts in the 1730's and 1740's. Judging from his copious writings on the topic of religious discernment, he went to great lengths to discourage any acceptance of either extreme as constituting true Christianity.

Just as Augustine's use of "heart" gives it an almost distinct personality equivalent to the self in its active capacity, so too does Edwards' use of "heart." His heart is capable of discerning truth,⁵⁸ of sensing the "sweetness" of true knowledge of God,⁵⁹ is the locus for the work of the Holy Spirit,⁶⁰ experiences "holy joy"⁶¹ and can understand spiritual truths.⁶² The regenerate heart which is the recipient of grace is large, while the heart of the sinner is hard because it belongs to the kingdom of Satan.⁶³ The heart is where true virtue is to be found⁶⁴ and is able to delight in union with Christ.⁶⁵ Edwards also refers to the heart as the place where conversion is effected by the work of the Holy Spirit who "is sent by both (Father and Son), into the world to influence the hearts of the children of men to their salvation."⁶⁶

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁵⁷ *The Great Awakening, Works*, 4, p. 298. Erdt, *Jonathan Edwards: Art and the Sense of the Heart*, p. 22.

⁵⁸ "A Spiritual Understanding of Divine Things Denied to the Unregenerate," in *Sermons and Discourses, Works*, 13, p. 78.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 85.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 85-86; see also "Charity and Its Fruits," Sermon Thirteen, "Grace Never Overthrown," *Ethical Writings, Works* 8, p. 341.

⁶⁴ "True Virtue," in *Ethical Writings, Works* 8, p. 539. "virtue is the beauty of the qualities and exercises of the heart."

⁶⁵ "The Wise and Foolish Virgins." Unpublished sermon on Matt. 25: 1-12a, The Jonathan Edwards Centre, Yale Divinity School, p. 46.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

The image of the “wounded heart” which is a commonplace in Augustine, is not part of Edwards’ imagery of the heart affected by sin although he compares conversion to resurrection from the dead as the ultimate healing of the heart.⁶⁷ Instead, he prefers to speak of the “hard heart.” He is unashamedly pessimistic about the human heart in its natural state, and in words very reminiscent of Augustine describes it thus: “The heart of a natural man is not at rest. It is uneasily going from one thing to another pursuing after happiness.”⁶⁸ Because the human heart is sinful and corrupt, it is “dull and stupid.”⁶⁹ While people might try to cover the “pollution and deformity in their hearts,”⁷⁰ God’s light is able to penetrate its depths to expose the wickedness therein.⁷¹ Sinners are devoid of “pious” affections⁷² because God has hardened their hearts by abandoning them to the power of sin, and without the gift of grace they will never be converted. Again Edwards echoes Augustine in seeing sin as privative. It is the absence of holiness in the heart that constitutes its hardness, and the presence in the heart of Trinitarian affections that constitutes its holiness. The great work of conversion is “God’s taking away the heart of stone, and giving an heart of flesh.”⁷³

One other very important category of the heart with which Edwards is concerned is “the new sense of the heart” which is at the centre of his spiritual epistemology. Although the connection between Edwards’ spiritual epistemology and the Trinity will be examined in detail in Chapter Three, it is necessary to mention it briefly here because it confirms that the “heart” is at the core of Edwards’ Trinitarianism and is the focus of his interest in conversion.⁷⁴

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 69; *Confessions*, I. 1. 1, p. 3. “because you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless, until it rests in you.” (CCSL 27, 1). “quia fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te.”

⁶⁹ *Religious Affections*, *Works*, 2, p. 301.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 327.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117. One of Edwards’ most common references to the sinful human heart is that it is by nature a heart of stone. In the *Religious Affections* he cites a string of passages to confirm his view that hardness of heart is characteristic of those whose affections are misguided (Ezek. 3:7, 36: 26-27; Rom. 2:5; Ps. 95:7-10; 2 Chron. 36:13; Is. 63: 17).

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 118.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 117.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 99. True conversion is evidenced by “vigorous engagedness of the heart in religion, that is the fruit of a real circumcision of the heart, or true regeneration.” See also “Miscellany” no. 397 in *The “Miscellanies,” Works*, 13, p. 264. The “prime alteration in conversion, that which is first and the foundation of all, is the alteration of the temper and disposition and spirit of the mind.”

1.5 The Conversion of the Heart:

i. Edwards' Early Writings

It is possible to gain an insight into Edwards' state of mind before he was finally converted from his early writings. At first glance, conversion may have seemed quite unnecessary for one with such solid credentials for church membership as had Edwards, but like Augustine, as a young man Edwards suffered anxiety about the doctrine of the sovereignty of God and struggled with his spiritual life. An examination of Edwards' early Christian life and experience is instructive in explaining his insistence that conversion is a divine work of the Triune God which takes place in the heart. The autobiographical sources for Edwards' early struggles with conversion are a list of "Resolutions,"⁷⁵ his "Diary,"⁷⁶ and a comparatively short account of his conversion written some twenty years after it took place known as the *Personal Narrative*.⁷⁷ These three sources of Edwards' youthful search for Christian assurance reveal that the dynamics of Edwards' spiritual life fluctuated over a number of years in late adolescence and early manhood. During this time he was a student at Yale, held a pastorate in New York, and then returned to Yale as a tutor. There are significant differences in style and tone between the earlier and later sources. Ostensibly, he was always a Christian, but the emphasis in the early documents is on doubt as to his salvation and stringent self-directed efforts to live a holy life. George Marsden is not exaggerating with his observation that "His spiritual life was often an immense struggle"⁷⁸ and the struggle appears particularly acute in

⁷⁵ Jonathan Edwards, "Resolutions," in *Letters and Personal Papers, Works* 16, p. 752-759. See Michael J. McClymond, *Encounters With God: An Approach to the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 38. McClymond is of the opinion that Edwards' spirituality as depicted in his "Diary" and the "Personal Narrative" is "fundamentally contemplative rather than active." By this he appears to be suggesting that Edwards' subjectivity is dominated by personal concerns and that he lacked a practical love for others. It is certainly true to say that these works of spiritual introspection reveal his own experiences of the heart, but not true to say that his spirituality was *in toto*, inactive or only contemplative. Edwards preferred solitude and found the role of pastor taxing, even too much for him at times judging by the bouts of sickness that seemed to accompany or follow exhaustion, but he devoted adequate time to his parishioners and was highly influential in his engagement with other clergy in his area. Added to the daily routines of study, visitation, family duties and meetings is a voluminous correspondence with like-minded people in New England and other theologians in Britain. Edwards may have wished that he had more time for contemplation, but his busy round of clergy and family business precluded that desire.

⁷⁶ "Diary," in *Letters and Personal Papers, Works*, 16, pp. 759-789.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 790-804.

⁷⁸ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, pp. 1, 45.

his early personal papers.⁷⁹ Any sense of delight in divine things is sparse in the first two documents-the theology is all there, but Edwards is bereft of a sense of the divine love in his heart.

The list of *Resolutions* was begun when Edwards was about nineteen and highlights his concern to improve his daily habits so that every moment is accountable to God and will lead to holiness. The first resolution in 1722 sets the tone for the other sixty-nine. Everything is to be done for God's glory; nothing ungodly is to remain in the commitment of the whole heart to God.⁸⁰ Unease with his inner life is manifest on July 23rd when he resolves to "lay open my soul to him: all my sins, temptations, difficulties, sorrows, fears hopes, desires, and everything..."⁸¹ Clearly there is a wholehearted commitment to the pursuit of holiness but without a corresponding sense of assurance.

Like many Puritans, Edwards kept a diary for a number of years to record his spiritual progress.⁸² The language of Edwards' Diary is intensely serious and as with the "Resolutions," altogether lacking in the feelings of joy, delight and sweetness that characterize his sense of self as a converted Christian. The same fear of failure to live every moment as a "complete Christian...and appearing excellent and lovely"⁸³ is

⁷⁹ Richard Bushman, "Jonathan Edwards and Puritan Consciousness," in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 5 (Fall, 1966), p. 394. Richard Bushman has argued that Edwards' early struggles revolve around a crisis of the will occasioned by his problems with submission to God's sovereignty "The Diary stresses the surrender of self and renunciation of pride. The Personal Narrative emphasizes the discovery of beauty in God's sovereign right to punish. Both forms of submission can be seen as aspects of a single experience..." Edwards mentions this persistent theological difficulty and its resolution in the *Personal Narrative*, but he is struggling with other issues as well. He mentions sloth, lack of application to duty, weakness of resolve, loss of friendships, evil speaking, worldliness, pride, wasting time, lack of respect for his parents and fretting to name just a sample. See *Personal Narrative, Works*, 16, pp. 791-792, and his "Diary," in *Works*, 16, Sat. Jan. 5, p. 760; Sat. Jan. 5., p. 761; Wed., Jan 9. p. 761; Tues. Jan. 15., p. 765; Tues. Feb. 5., p. 766; Sat., Mar. 2, p. 767; Sat. May 18, p. 770; Tues. May 21, p. 771.

⁸⁰ "Resolutions," no. 1, in *Works*, 16, p. 753. The "Resolutions", which are partly contemporaneous with the "Diary" are earnest in both tone and intent. They set out a program for the improvement of the self, a list of spiritual instructions for the saint on pilgrimage. There is something of the young Luther in Edwards' *Resolutions*-the same scrupulous attention to the minutiae of the religious life in order to identify sins and to eradicate them.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, no. 65, p. 758.

⁸² Kenneth P. Minkema, "Chronology of Edwards' Life and Writings," in *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards* ed., Sang Hyun Lee (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005) xxiii. Edwards begins his Diary on December 18th 1722 and the last entry is for June 11th 1735. Most of the entries were made by the middle of 1724, with the greatest number of entries written in 1723 during his New York pastorate. These early works dedicated to charting the course of his spiritual life culminate in the *Personal Narrative* of 1740, a retrospective account of his own conversion experience which occurred in the summer of 1721 at East Windsor.

⁸³ "Resolutions," no. 63. in *Letters and Personal Papers, Works*, 16, p. 758.

apparent in his very first “Diary” entry where he expresses reservations as to whether he was truly converted.⁸⁴ On July 8th 1723, he determined to “cast and venture my soul on the Lord Jesus Christ, to trust and confide in him, and consecrate myself wholly to him” when he is “in the best and happiest frame of mind.” In so doing, he will have “assurance of my safety, knowing that I confide in my Redeemer.”⁸⁵ On January 18th 1723, he mentions the “death I have been in these several days”⁸⁶ so it is apparent that Edwards suffered the agonies of doubt and depression, just as Augustine had done in his long search.

At this early stage in his spiritual pilgrimage, he had already, so he thought, placed his hopes in Jesus Christ, but he evinces reservations about the depth of his commitment, reminding himself to constantly “be looking into the state of my soul, that I may know whether I have truly an interest in Christ or no.”⁸⁷ In short, his heart at that stage of his life was one marked by fluctuating feelings of doubt and assurance but it is only in hindsight that he realizes that his heart was the problem.⁸⁸ On reflection he notes that conversion for him, as it was for Augustine, was a somewhat uneven process. His final conversion experience came only after a long period of heart-searching and disquiet of conscience interspersed with periods of seeming illumination or “shifts in perception” as Dilthey characterizes them.⁸⁹

Edwards continues his introspective self-disclosure of the conversion experience in the *Personal Narrative*, written in December 1739, some twenty years after it occurred and on the eve of the Great Awakening.

ii. The Personal Narrative

The importance Edwards and his Puritan forbears placed on conversion cannot be overemphasized, and proof of conversion was an important part of the spiritual

⁸⁴ “Diary,” *ibid.*, p. 759. “I do not feel the Christian graces sensibly enough, particularly faith.”

⁸⁵ “Resolutions,” no. 53, *ibid.*, p. 757.

⁸⁶ “Diary,” *ibid.*, p. 765.

⁸⁷ “Resolutions,” no. 48, *ibid.*, p. 757.

⁸⁸ “Diary,” *ibid.*, Jan. 5th, p. 760; Jan. 15th, p. 764; Jan. 17th, p. 765; Sat. April 11th, p. 768. As a sometimes day to day account of the workings of his mind from December 1722-1725, the “Diary” is a collection of 148 entries which reflect the parlous state of his spiritual life. It gives a picture of a young man who was devoted to his religion but very anxious about his failings and prey to depression. There are references to periods of “a long dreadful dullness” as he charts the movement of a heart foundering in the mire of self-castigation for perceived spiritual failings.

⁸⁹ Wilhelm Dilthey, *Pattern and Meaning in History: Thoughts on History and Society*, trans. H. P. Rickman (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), pp. 104-105.

life.⁹⁰ Edwards found himself at odds with his own heritage, where, under the aegis of the half-way covenant, conversion had become for many a matter of communal intellectual assent to covenantal obligations.⁹¹ Conversion can have false guises as Edwards' dismay at the erratic behaviour of some of the converted reveal. Widespread criticism of the emotional excesses of the revivals from his adversaries made justification of the genuine conversions imperative. He was anxious to caution against the pitfalls of excessively emotional conversion experiences which failed to last, without denying the validity of the affectional component in the genuine ones.

Some Puritans emphasised intellectual judgment and assent first with the testimony of the heart as a subsequent step. However, as his Personal Narrative demonstrates, Edwards elevated the changed heart over the intellect as the defining characteristic of the spiritual life.⁹² While the understanding could give a persuasive account of the Christian gospel to the mind, it could not give the spiritual knowledge of God in the heart. This helps to explain Edwards' troubled spiritual life. His somewhat checkered career differed markedly from those of his fellow Puritans. The greatest difficulty lay in the order of conversion experiences. Edwards failed to follow the usual sequence of spiritual awakening as depicted in contemporary literature, but was strong enough to refuse to submit to what he considered were too rigid Puritan strictures.⁹³

⁹⁰ Patricia Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative: The Beginnings of American Expression* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 58. The original model for later conversion morphologies, according to Caldwell, was Luther's two stage theory of repentance. "First, under the work of the law, the sinner saw his sin and was sorry for it; only then, under grace, was he enabled to resolve to amend his life. That resolution was literally a turning point or conversion." By the end of the seventeenth century, as C. C. Goen puts it "the steps of the pilgrim's progress had become so fixed in the new England mind as to give the religious experiences narrated by applicants for church membership the appearance of a set form." *The Great Awakening, Works*, 4, p. 26. See also Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, p. 212. In the seventeenth century Puritan model, long struggles and feelings or terror at the prospect of hell went on for months or years before the cataclysmic moment of self-surrender and spiritual transformation. The parallel between death and re-birth, or disintegration and re-structuring was obvious. Conrad Cherry describes the Puritan morphology of conversion as the identification of "belief upon moral evidence and under a conviction of the judgment and conscience" accompanied by saving grace in the heart.

⁹¹ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, pp. 30-31.

⁹² Allen C. Guelzo, "The Spiritual Structures of Jonathan Edwards," in *The Bulletin of the Congregational Library*, vol. 44/45, 1/3, (1993), pp. 1-15; p. 4.

⁹³ For an overview of Jonathan Edwards' Puritan heritage see Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*. A number of scholarly studies explore the Puritan conversion experience including, Norman Pettit, *The Heart Prepared: Grace and Conversion in Puritan Spiritual Life*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966); Charles Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Puritan Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); Jerald C. Brauer, "Conversion: From Puritanism To Revivalism," in *The*

The immediate historical context helps to explain Edwards' interest in delineating the contours of the converted heart. Many in his congregation at the time of writing the *Personal Narrative* had lost the fervour of their initial conversions in the earlier revivals and Edwards knew the signs of spiritual decay from his past experiences. Like Augustine's *Confessions*, the "Personal Narrative" is designed to give an account of a genuine conversion experience so that others might be able to examine their own hearts and determine their spiritual state.⁹⁴

Journal of Religion, 1978, 227-243.; See also Jerard C. Brauer, "Types of Puritan Piety," in *Church History*, no. 56, (1987), pp. 39-58.; David C. Brand, *Profile of the Last Puritan: Jonathan Edwards, Self-Love, and the Dawn of the Beatific* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991) ; George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, pp. 26-29; Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963), pp. 66-69. Morgan has shown that the Puritans, beginning with William Perkins, established a series of at least ten steps or stages in conversion. He claims that Edwards "was able to furnish a new morphology of conversion." *Letters and Personal Papers, Works*, 16, p 759. In his "Diary" entry of December 18th 1722, Edwards analyses his ambivalence towards God, confiding, "The reason why I, in the least question my interest in God's love and favour, is:

1. I cannot speak so fully to my experiences of that preparatory work of which divines speak.
2. I do not remember that I experienced regeneration, exactly in those steps, in which divines say it is generally wrought, and
3. I do not feel the Christian graces sensibly enough."

In a much later letter to the Reverend Peter Clark dated May 7th 1750, Edwards speaks strongly against those who prescribe the stages of conversion: "I have much disliked the tyranny of those who set up their own experience as a rule to judge others by, and of such as insist on a particular account of the time of conversion, and of the order and method of their experiences..." *Letters and Personal Writings, Works*, 16, p. 343. Edwards expressed similar sentiments in the *Religious Affections*. "No order or method of operations and experiences is any certain sign of their divinity." *Religious Affections, Works*, 2, p. 159.

See Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, "Conversion: Nature and Grace," pp. 56-70. for a discussion of the Puritan morphology of conversion. According to Cherry, and it is clear from the *Personal Narrative*, Edwards did experience some of the preparatory steps of conversion, including the struggles with sin, fear of rejection because of God's anger against sin, and the revulsion against sin so typical of his Puritan forbears. Near the end of his college days, for example, he recalls a bout of pleurisy which brought him "nigh to the grave" and shook him "over the pit of hell." He entered a phase of cyclical despair over his sinfulness and the uncertainty of salvation, followed by periods of re-dedication and resolutions to live a more holy life. In *his Religious Affections*, first delivered as a sermon series in 1744 then published as a book in 1746, Edwards repudiates the old Puritan morphology completely. His intention was to identify the true and false marks of the affections in conversion and the life of piety so that people might be able to discern true religion. This exhaustive treatment of "experimental religion" was prefigured by his own conversion narrative in which he talked about "a new sense of the heart" as the defining characteristic of the saved sinner. See also *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards From His Private Notebooks*, ed. Harvey G. Townsend (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 1955), p. 116. Townsend suggests that without abandoning the old morphology entirely, he criticised it for its insistence on the "dreadfulness of punishment" rather than the "worth of the reward."

⁹⁴ Ava Chamberlain, "Brides of Christ and Signs of Grace: Edwards Sermon Series on the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins," in *Jonathan Edwards' Writings: Text, Context and Interpretation*, ed., Stephen J. Stein (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 4-7. In the wake of the fraudulent claims to conversion after the revival of 1735, Edwards avoided anything that hinted of enthusiasm on one hand or works righteousness on the other. When it seemed as if many were slipping away from their earlier convictions, he preached three lengthy sermon series in the late 1730's in an attempt to recall his congregation to the fervour and piety of the revival days. Very simply, his message

Any comparison of the two accounts is hampered by the differences in style and length. The *Personal Narrative* is much shorter in length than the *Confessions* and does not contain many references to external social, personal or political events. Edwards manifests the same besetting passion to explore the movements of his heart as does Augustine, but gives the barest details about other people in his life or significant events. His intentions are not so much autobiographical as spiritual.⁹⁵ Where Augustine pours out his innermost thoughts, loves and friendships in the form of a prayer as he re-traces the intricacies of his long search for God, (or God's pursuit of him as he was to acknowledge), Edwards writes about his conversion as a memoir directed to himself. R. H. Niebuhr describes it as a "confession of loyalty to the kingdom of God."⁹⁶ Yet another assessment regards it as "a depiction of successive

concerned the love of God as seen in choosing to share the intratrinitarian love with sinners, and the ways in which the marks of the redeemed could be identified. In the first of the series on the "Wise and Foolish Virgins" (Matthew 25: 1-12) preached in 1737, Edwards likens conversion to marriage, but claims that it is an even closer union than marriage because the believer is united with Christ in the heart by love: "the heart does it and really, freely and with delight. This is the act of faith which is the act of the heart and whole soul, whereby it comes into union with Christ." Edwards came to the conclusion that conversion is not about following steps to achieve a result, but about knowing the love and loveliness of God in the heart.

⁹⁵ Samuel Hopkins, *The Life and Character of the Late Reverend Mr. Jonathan Edwards*, (Boston, 1765), p. 22. Hopkins was convinced that the "Personal Narrative" was "wrote near twenty years after, for his own private advantage," but it is too contrived to be the simple reflections of a closet diarist. He is reputed to have spent thirteen hours a day in his study and there is a perception that he found the pastoral concerns of his parishioners something of an intrusion. Many of his semi-mystical experiences took place when he was out walking or riding alone and there is no suggestion that he discloses them to any but close family members. He was a great admirer of the natural world and felt that its beauty pointed to the Creator of beauty.

See also Charles Hambrick-Stowe, "The 'Inward, Sweet Sense' of Christ in Jonathan Edwards, in *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards: American Religion and the Evangelical Tradition*, eds., D.G. Hart, Sean Michael Lucas, Stephen J. Nichols, (Grand Rapids USA, Baker Academic, 2003), p. 79.

Daniel B. Shea, Jr., "The Art and Instruction of Jonathan Edwards' Personal Narrative," in *American Literature*, Vol. 37, 1 (Mar., 1965), pp. 17-32. Shea contends that the *Personal Narrative* has a dual intention. First, he argues that it is a fresh appraisal of Edwards' spiritual pilgrimage based on a mature reconsideration of material in his diaries. Secondly, it has a bi-fold pedagogical purpose; that of inspiring those of his readers who lack his experiences of delight in heart religion by outlining his own discoveries, and also to highlight true religious affections as opposed to the corruptions that he had most likely observed himself in the revival of 1735. Another suggestion is that there may have been a need for Edwards to justify the legitimacy of his conversion experiences to counteract prevailing notions of a rigid Puritan morphology of conversion which Edwards' experiences did not mirror. He found himself at odds with his own heritage, where, under the aegis of the half-way covenant, conversion had become for many a matter of communal intellectual assent to covenantal obligations. See Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, pp. 30-31. See also "Personal Narrative," *Letters and Personal Papers, Works*, 16, pp. 791, 794. "My concern continued and prevailed, with many exercising things and inward struggles; but yet it never seemed to be proper to express my concern that I had, by the name of terror," only regret that he had not turned to God sooner.

⁹⁶ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1937), p. 101.

states of experience”⁹⁷ in which Edwards is never very far from his Christian nativity, unlike Augustine who traversed the wilderness of pagan philosophy before finding his true spiritual home in Christ. One scholar has suggested that Edwards reveals a high state of anxiety as to the validity of his own conversion, but his struggles are fairly typical of religious conversion experiences in general.⁹⁸

Edwards does, however, pay close attention to the tremors of a heart in pilgrimage seeking God as does Augustine in the *Confessions*. For all his impeccable spiritual pedigree, Edwards laments his insecurities of faith and frequent lapses from his self-imposed high standards of behaviour. His heart emerges as the culprit in his spiritual autobiography, convicting him of sinful attitudes and behaviour which inhibit the sense of God’s presence in his heart. It is the real stumbling block to complete assurance of salvation and that is why conversion, when it happens, is so dramatic. There is a complete *volte face* in the orientation of his heart.

Two key images dominate the “Personal Narrative,” Edwards’ heart and the Trinity. The “heart” is mentioned some 23 times and is interchanged with mind and soul throughout. It is his heart that changes from being absorbed with negative feelings of anxiety over his salvation to feelings of great joy and love for the beauty of the Trinitarian being of God. Writing as a mature Christian, having been pastor of Northampton for more than a decade and having experienced “two remarkable seasons of awakenings”⁹⁹ in his community, Edwards reveals that it was a heightened sensibility to the role of the Trinity in the conversion of his heart that distinguished his final conversion from his earlier experiences. He notes feelings of delight and joy when his heart finally perceived the beauty and excellency of all three persons of the Trinity in the work of redemption.¹⁰⁰ Once he understood that true

⁹⁷ Michael J. McClymond, *Encounters With God*, p.42. Many of Edwards semi-mystical experiences took place when he was out walking or riding alone. He is reputed to have spent thirteen hours a day in his study and there is a perception that he found the pastoral concerns of his parishioners something of an intrusion. Edwards’s significant spiritual epiphanies occur when he is alone, and there is no suggestion that he discloses them to any but close family members.

⁹⁸ Patricia J. Tracey, *Jonathan Edwards, Pastor: Religion and Society in Eighteenth Century Northampton* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980), pp. 58-64.

⁹⁹ “Personal Narrative,” in *Letters and Personal Papers, Works* 16, p. 790.

¹⁰⁰ Unpublished sermon on Matt. 25: 1-12a (1737), The Jonathan Edwards Centre, Yale Divinity School, p. 63. “Indeed the Christian when brought into union with Christ loves Christ and loves him above all, but her love is the fruit of his ‘tis because he has sweetly and powerfully drawn her by enlightening of her to see his glory and beauty.”

“conversion” was personal, experiential, and Trinitarian in focus, his whole thinking on the nature of the religious life changed.

His delight and joy in the Trinitarian beauty of God comes to his heart as a sense or taste of “sweetness,” something he has not known before, but which was well known in Puritan circles and is found in Augustine. The “inward sense” of sweetness is derived from a devotional tradition going back to the Song of Solomon, or the Canticles as the Puritans called it. It was a tradition familiar to Augustine who also experiences God’s love in the heart as a sense of sweetness. The gift of grace in the heart that they identify with conversion is an aesthetic experience. Edwards vocabulary of “sweetness” to describe the new sense of the heart that he identifies with grace is commonplace throughout his works, and especially so in his conversion account where “sweet” or its cognates occurs 55 times.¹⁰¹ The language throughout the “Personal Narrative” is charged with an emotional intensity reminiscent of a latent Romanticism that has seen him linked to Emerson,¹⁰² Wordsworth,¹⁰³ Coleridge,¹⁰⁴ and Kierkegaard.¹⁰⁵

Looking back on his time at Yale Edwards is aware of a number of “mini-conversions” in his experience which sadly, did not last. Seasons of the heart charged with an almost mystical experience of God’s presence are contrasted with seasons of

¹⁰¹ See Charles Hambrick-Stowe, “The ‘Inward, Sweet Sense’ of Christ in Jonathan Edwards, pp. 79-95. Hambrick-Stowe notes that the Puritan journals and autobiographies of New England commonly used the language used by Edwards in his efforts to portray the intensely personal and affective character of the spirituality of evangelical Calvinism. 88-89. For a valuable exposition of the influence of Puritanism on Edwards’ reading of the religious affections see Brad Walton, *Jonathan Edwards, Religious Affections and the Puritan Analysis of True Piety, Spiritual Sensation, and Heart Religion*, p. 1. Walton argues convincingly that Edwards is heavily indebted to his Puritan forbears for his analysis of the religious affections. In Walton’s estimation, the major difference between Edwards and his Puritan predecessors lies in his more rigorous philosophical presentation, which is not based on Lockean epistemology but is expressed in Puritan categories of heart-religion.

¹⁰² Perry Miller, “From Edwards to Emerson,” in *Errand into the Wilderness*, p. 195.

¹⁰³ Ola Elizabeth Winslow, *Jonathan Edwards, 1703-1758: A Biography* (New York: Macmillan, 1940), p. 43.

¹⁰⁴ Stuart Piggin and Dianne Cook, “Keeping Alive the Heart in the Head: The Significance of ‘Eternal Language’ in the Aesthetics of Jonathan Edwards and S. T. Coleridge,” in *Literature and Theology*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Dec. 2004), pp. 383-414.

¹⁰⁵ Harold P. Simonson, *Jonathan Edwards: Theologian of the Heart* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975), p. 102. Simonson notes that Edwards experienced a more overflowing sense of God’s glory and the sense of it in the human heart than did Kierkegaard, but “there was in both writers a religious passion that dominated their lives and a sense of the heart that infused their words, to the extent that today’s reader finds himself strangely compelled to return again and again to their writing.” In Simonson’s appraisal of Edwards, it is the importance of the sense of the heart in religious experience that is the link with Kierkegaard, as I argue it is that same link that connects Edwards and Augustine.

severe dejection over sinful thoughts and behaviour which last well beyond his initial conversion.¹⁰⁶ The pattern of failure and re-commitment continued for some time because what looked like a truly converted heart reverted to sinful practices “like a dog to his vomit.”¹⁰⁷ He recalls that after youthful occasions where his affections seemed to be lively and sincere “I entirely lost all those affections and delights.”¹⁰⁸ After much soul-searching, he notes that he felt the need and was brought to change his worldly attitude from one of seeking salvation for his own personal benefit to fixing his mind on Christ and his mediatorial role in order “for an interest”¹⁰⁹ in him. This was a crucial point in Edwards’s conversion process.¹¹⁰ He moved to a position where all thought of reward disappeared and he was caught up in the sheer beauty and excellency of Christ’s salvific work. This shift in perspective from a view of conversion for self advantage to a disinterested love of God is also to be found in Augustine.¹¹¹

At the centre of Edwards’ difficulties lay the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, the greatest of Augustine’s spiritual dilemmas.¹¹² Ultimately both attribute the refusal to honour God’s sovereignty to pride which they regard as the origin of all other vices. It is not until Edwards surrenders all hope of achieving his own salvation that he is converted. Edwards’ acceptance of God’s sovereignty¹¹³ is absolutely

¹⁰⁶ For example, towards the end of the *Narrative*, most probably during 1738/39, Edwards confesses that “I am greatly afflicted with a proud and self-righteous spirit; much more sensibly, than I used to be formerly. I see that serpent rising and putting forth its head, continually, everywhere, all around me.” *Personal Narrative*, Works, 16, p. 803.

¹⁰⁷ Edwards, *Personal Narrative*, Works, 16, p. 791. “I had a variety of concerns and exercises about my soul from my childhood; but I had two remarkable seasons of awakening, before I met with that change, by which I was brought to these new dispositions, and that new sense of things, that I have since had.”

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.791.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* Consequently he wrote, “I was indeed brought to seek salvation in a manner that I never was before. I felt a spirit to part with all things in the world, for an interest in Christ.”

¹¹¹ *Confessions*, VI, 16. 26, p. 110. “For I was so submerged and blinded that I could not think of the light of moral goodness and of a beauty to be embraced for its own sake-beauty seen not by the eye of the flesh, but only by inward discernment.” A similar sentiment is found in “Sermon 385. 4,” in *WSA*, III/10, pp. 387-388. “We ought to be on our guard against loving God for any reward...Worship him freely, and you will receive God himself.”

¹¹² “Personal Narrative,” in *Letters and Personal Papers*, Works 16, p. 792. “From my childhood up, my mind had been full of objections against the doctrine of God’s sovereignty, in choosing whom he would to eternal life, and rejecting whom he pleased; leaving them eternally to perish, and be everlastingly tormented in hell.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 792. In hindsight, he could identify the time when he was finally able to “put an end to all those cavils and objections against God’s sovereignty” but at the time, couldn’t “give an account, how, or by what means”, he came to accept the doctrine.

crucial to his change of heart so it is surprising to read Stephen Yarborough's assessment of the initial acceptance of it as representing "minute changes."¹¹⁴ Considering Edwards' distinct unease with the doctrine for the whole of his Christian life up to that point, it was a monumental change of perspective to accept it so willingly, even allowing that at first it was more rational than experiential. Edwards appears to minimize its initial impact to heighten the effect of his later "delightful conviction" of God's sovereignty that came with "that sort of inward sweet delight in God and divine things."¹¹⁵

On looking back, Edwards locates his earliest apprehension of spiritual sweetness in the heart to his reading of 1 Tim. 1:17: "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory forever and ever, Amen." His change of heart took the form of an immediate intuition (meaning here in Edwards' terminology, unmediated) of the divine beauty and loveliness which he later associated with the presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart.¹¹⁶ The influence of this passage on Edwards's continuing conversion is decisive. As he contemplates God's majesty and wisdom in that passage he remembers experiencing "a new sense" of God's glory "diffused" in his heart and being moved to an almost mystical desire to be united with him.¹¹⁷

He describes his changed inclination towards the doctrine of God's sovereignty as a gradual process from "caviling," to a "conviction," and finally to a "delightful conviction"¹¹⁸ in his heart. His somewhat rational first conviction of God's sovereignty is replaced with a much more affective conviction that "God's absolute

¹¹⁴ Stephen R. Yarborough and John C. Adams, eds., *Delightful Conviction: Jonathan Edwards and the Rhetoric of Conversion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993), p. 6.

¹¹⁵ "Personal Narrative," in *Writings on the Trinity, Grace, and Faith, Works*, 16, p. 792.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 799.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* Edwards may well be referring to his own experience when he writes some years later, "Conversion is a great and glorious work of God's power, at once changing the heart and infusing life into the dead soul; though that grace that is then implanted does more gradually display itself in some more than others." He continues "but as to fixing on the precise time when they put forth the very first act of grace, there is a great deal of difference in different persons; in some it seems to be very discernible when the very time of this was; but others are more at a loss. In this respect there are very many that don't know the time (as has already been observed), that when they have the first exercises of grace, don't know that is the grace of conversion, and sometimes don't think it to be so till a long time after..." *The Great Awakening, Works*, 4, p. 177.

sovereignty and justice has very often appeared an exceedingly pleasant, bright and sweet doctrine to me: and absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God.”¹¹⁹

It may well be that Edwards’ first conviction was one of intellectual assent alone to the doctrine of God’s sovereignty. There is no mention in the first instance of any involvement of the heart in his acceptance of the “justice and reasonableness” of God’s sovereignty.¹²⁰ This may also account for his failure to discern “anything spiritual, or of a saving nature”¹²¹ in those youthful experiences, most probably because his experience didn’t correspond with the prescriptive pattern he had come to expect,¹²² but also because they lacked a sense of “sweetness” in the heart. In common with his Puritan forbears, Edwards compared his experience of saving grace to tasting or smelling sweetness.¹²³ In a much later sermon “True Grace Distinguished from the Experience of Devils” (1752), Edwards was to make the experiential knowledge or “tasting” the sweetness of God’s beauty and holiness in the heart the defining characteristic of true faith.¹²⁴

Edwards’ “wonderful alteration of mind”¹²⁵ inaugurates the new perspective from which he is to understand and delineate spiritual experience.¹²⁶ Henceforth, the heart is the crux of conversion and the spiritual life. Looking at life from the perspective of the converted heart means that the whole creation is infused with

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 792. His initial acceptance is somewhat limited: “now I saw further, and my reason apprehended the justice and reasonableness of it.”

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 793

¹²² Most probably because Edwards was hesitant to “express my concern that I had, by the name of terror,” a favoured step in the traditional Puritan format for conversion.” Avihu Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards and the Re-Enchantment of the World*, p. 62. “The Conversion of Jonathan Edwards,” in *Journal of Presbyterian History*, vol. 76, no. 2, (1998), pp. 127-138, 129. Zakai suggests that the “terror” mentioned by Edwards refers to a realization that his concern for the name of Christ would not be achieved by a dramatic spiritual breakdown, a common theme in other Puritan conversion narratives.

¹²³ So in *Religious Affections*, Edwards distinguishes between natural taste and a “divine taste given and maintained by the Spirit of God in the hearts of the saints, whereby they are in like manner led and guided in discerning and distinguishing the true spiritual and holy beauty of actions.” *Religious Affections, Works*, 2, p. 286.

¹²⁴ “True Grace Distinguished from the Experience of Devils,” in *Sermons and Discourses, Works*, 25, pp. 605-640; p. 636.

“This sense of divine beauty, is the first thing in the actual change made in the soul. in true conversion, and is the foundation of everything else belonging to that change.”

¹²⁵ “Personal Narrative,” in *Letters and Personal Papers, Works*, 16, p. 792.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 793.

divine glory for the young Edwards.¹²⁷ He had always enjoyed the beauties of the natural world but after conversion he has a new appreciation for the “book of nature” as a revelation of divine beauty and holiness.¹²⁸ Of far greater significance is his realization that conversion necessitates the participation of all three Trinitarian persons. Edwards views his conversion in explicitly Trinitarian terms with “man’s absolute dependence on the operations of God’s Holy Spirit”¹²⁹ of equal importance with that of the “excellency of the gospel of Christ.”¹³⁰ The Incarnation takes on new significance with “a new kind of apprehensions and ideas of Christ.”¹³¹ These “new kinds of apprehensions” of the redemptive purposes of God bring joy and delight to his heart. The Holy Spirit infuses in his heart a profound sense of God’s Trinitarian beauty and holiness with his new appreciation of the salvific work of Christ.

The mere mention of one word to do with the gospel causes his heart “to burn within me” and he enthuses “God has appeared glorious to me, on account of the Trinity. It has made me have exalting thoughts of God, that he subsists in three persons; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”¹³² This new sense of the heart would “kindle up a sweet burning in my heart; an ardour of my soul, that I know not how to express.”¹³³ Affection and understanding are united in his new perception of the glory of “the divine excellency of the things of God.”¹³⁴

The new apprehension of the divine glory rouses a deep longing in Edwards’ heart to be identified with the triune God.¹³⁵ His heart “pants” after humility and the desire for God to be his whole life. Conversely, he is filled with “mourning and lamenting”¹³⁶ over his previous backsliding. In retrospect, his more youthful religious

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 793-794: “the appearance of everything was altered: there seemed to be, as it were, a calm, sweet cast, or appearance of divine glory, in almost everything. God’s excellency, his wisdom, his purity and his love seemed to appear in everything.”

¹²⁸ Clyde Holbrook, “Jonathan Edwards and His Detractors,” in *Theology Today*, 10, (1953), p. 392. Holbrook sees Edwards interest in nature as a continuation of his Calvinism in that the whole universe testified to “the handiwork of a holy and beauteous God.”

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 799.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 801, 803. It is the Spirit of God who gives Edwards the glorious vision of God the Father as “an infinite fountain of divine glory and sweetness; being full and sufficient to fill and satisfy the soul: pouring forth itself in sweet communications, like the sun in its glory, sweetly and pleasantly diffusing light and life.”

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 793.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 800.

¹³³ “Personal Narrative,” in *Letters and Personal Papers, Works*, 16, p. 793.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 795.

¹³⁵ “Personal Narrative,” in *Letters and Personal Papers, Works*, 16, p. 794.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 796.

experiences are so far removed from the real thing as is the “mere notion or idea of, than one born blind has of pleasant and beautiful colours.”¹³⁷ The dramatic contrast between his earlier spiritual experiences and those of his changed heart brought into relief Edwards’ realization that the former had not really touched his heart. In those very early years at Yale, Edwards did not believe that he had been converted at all.

Despite the spiritual maturity that came with Edwards’ complete dedication to the Christian life, there was to be no room for complacency. From the vantage point of bitter experience, Edwards confesses that his initial conversion experiences of “sweetness” and rapture did not last. For a few years he was able to live a godly life, but confesses that he has had to learn to rely more on God’s sovereignty than his own righteousness as time has passed. Youthful ignorance precluded any knowledge of “the bottomless, infinite depths of wickedness, pride, hypocrisy and deceit left in my heart.”¹³⁸ In this respect his experience mirrors that of Augustine who worried about the “wounds” he continued to discover in his heart after conversion.¹³⁹ Thankfully, Edwards acknowledges that his reliance on the sovereignty of God ensures his eventual salvation and that of all the elect. The emphasis on the affective aspects of his conversion experiences in the “Personal Narrative” places Edwards very much in the tradition of Hebraic heart-religion. The deep intimacy he came to enjoy with the triune God of the Bible mirrors Augustine’s experiences of the divine love in the heart as revealed in his *Confessions*.

iii. Exemplars of Conversion

To bolster his emphasis on the change of heart required in conversion and to overcome the negative reactions of his critics after the Great Awakening, Edwards included case studies of model converts in his later works. In Edwards’ account of the conversions which follow, it can be seen that he gave priority to the changed heart. His reason for accepting the validity of the conversions he witnessed came down to

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 794. Edwards writes that his “new found delights in the things of religion, were of an exceedingly different kind....from those ...that I had when I was a boy”,

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 803.

¹³⁹ *Confessions*, X. 37. 62., X. 39. 64., pp. 216-217. (CCSL, 27, 190-191). His only comfort is that God will see his “heart trembling” amidst the dangers and trials and will continually heal him. “*quod in me saucium comperero; In his omnibus atque in huiusmodi periculis et laboribus uides tremorem cordis mei, et uulnera mea magis subinde a te sanare quam mihi non infligi senti.*”

the “new sense of the heart” which was visible in the very different post- conversion lives he describes.

(a) Sarah Edwards

To illustrate the heightened awareness of God’s grace in the converted heart, Edwards included an account of the special awakening of his wife Sarah. Written at a time when the revivals were under attack from rationalist critics, Edwards spoke out in their defence. He equates Sarah’s experience of revival with a “clear and lively view or sense of the infinite beauty and amiableness of Christ’s person.” This sense of “the heavenly sweetness of his excellent and transcendent love” indicated that her “heart was swallowed up in a kind of glow of Christ’s love...so that there seemed to be a constant flowing and reflowing from heart to heart.” Alongside her transports of delight, joy and ecstasy went a sober faith that continued in works of charity.¹⁴⁰ Even if Sarah’s experience was not that of a new convert, her inclusion in his exemplars of “true religion” authenticates Edwards’ contention that it is the heart filled with the divine love, joy and sweetness that leads to godly living and is the true mark of the redeemed saint.

(b) Phoebe Bartlett

Another of Edwards’ case studies illustrating the great change in the heart that he believed conversion signified is that of Phoebe Bartlett. A four year old girl, Phoebe experienced a definite conversion experience which greatly altered her disposition from being afraid of going to hell to being convinced that she was saved. She loved attending church and spent as much of her time as possible engaged in religious pursuits including works of love to the poor. Edwards was amongst those for whom Phoebe showed concern.¹⁴¹

(c) David Brainerd

Perhaps the most moving account of a conversion experience and subsequent life of piety appears in Edwards’ revision and publication of David Brainerd’s diaries recounting his life and death. In Edwards’ words “the reader

¹⁴⁰ “Some Thoughts Concerning the Revival,” in *The Great Awakening, Works*, 4, “Editor’s Introduction,” pp. 65-70; “An Example of Evangelical Piety,” pp. 331-342; 332.

¹⁴¹ *The Great Awakening, Works*, 4, pp. 199-205.

will see...what passed in his [Brainerd's] own heart, the wonderful change that he experienced in his mind and disposition, the manner in which that change was brought to pass, how it continued, what were its consequences in his inward frame." ¹⁴² Echoing Edwards' own conversion narrative Brainerd himself describes the moment of conversion as that wherein "my soul was so captivated and delighted with the excellency, loveliness, greatness, and other perfections of God, that I was even swallowed up in him ... I felt myself in a new world and everything about me discovered a different aspect from what they were wont to do."¹⁴³ Edwards is most enamoured of Brainerd's delighting in God's glory and beauty for itself and not for any perceptible benefit. Conversion is the result of God's glory and beauty "powerfully drawing and sweetly captivating his heart."¹⁴⁴

There is no doubt that for Edwards, conversion represents a change of heart that is inwardly discernible to the recipients of divine love and outwardly visible to those who know them. A similar picture of the conversion of the heart emerges from the pages of Augustine's *Confessions*.

¹⁴² "Jonathan Edwards' Introduction," to *The Life of David Brainerd, Works*, 7, p. 91.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 139-140.

¹⁴⁴ "The Life of David Brainerd: An Appendix," in *Works*, 7, p. 503.

AUGUSTINE

1.6 The Psychology of the “Heart” in Augustine’s Theology

Edwards’ religious psychology and anthropology bears a strong resemblance to Augustine’s imagery of the heart and its centrality to his Christian spirituality. The word “*cor*” and its derivatives occurs more than 8 000 times in his works.¹⁴⁵ In a recent biography of Augustine, O’Donnell observes that “Augustine stands near the head of the line of those who found meaning in the more intimate metaphor of the “heart,” the most private space, the most important space, the stage on which the real drama of a person’s life is played.”¹⁴⁶ The somewhat impersonal god of the Platonists is overtaken by a god who is related to Augustine through possession of his heart. His fusion of sense-perception, affectivity and volition led to Augustine’s identification of the heart with the will and the affections, a move Edwards was to emulate. In addition, Augustine anticipates Edwards by including a cognitive component in his use of the term “heart.”¹⁴⁷

It is true to say that Augustine’s understanding of “heart” best encapsulates the notion of human subjectivity.¹⁴⁸ There is a sense in which the heart is the whole person before God. It is who Augustine is in his existential being, the great battleground wherein his eventual conversion takes place.¹⁴⁹ A necessary first step on the road to conversion is to “lift up your heart” (*sursum corda*)¹⁵⁰ to God. To maintain the journey one must ascend in the heart (*ascendere in corde*),¹⁵¹ to God and not let go of Christ in the heart (*non reliqueris de corde tuo Christum*)¹⁵² in the face of trials and opposition.

As Hill observes, Augustine’s use of mind and heart is more inclusive than that understood today.¹⁵³ “Mind” in Augustine is “the subject of the higher psychic functions,

¹⁴⁵ See G. Madec, “*cor*,” in *Augustinus- Lexikon*, ed. Cornelius Mayer, vol. 1 (Basel: Schwabe & Co. AG, 2002), pp. 2-5, p. 2.

¹⁴⁶ James J. O’Donnell, *Augustine: Sinner and Saint: A New Biography*, (London: Profile Books, 2005), p.331.

¹⁴⁷ “Sermon 28. 4,” in *WSA*, III/2, p. 112. “Sound remains in the ears, meaning goes down to the heart.” Hill notes that the heart was the “organ of thought and the symbol of mind.” (p. 114).

¹⁴⁸ Madec, “*cor*,” in *Augustinus Lexikon*. Madec points out Augustine’s place in the patristic tradition of heart-language: “Dans toute la littérature patristique, le mot “*cor*” est un équivalent lyrique du mot “*anima*” et il apparaît spontanément lorsqu’à la langue philosophique se substitue le style poétique et biblique.” (p. 2).

¹⁴⁹ *Confessions*, VIII. 8. 19, p. 146.

¹⁵⁰ Kazuhiko Demura, “‘*Sursum Cor*’ in the Sermons of Saint Augustine,” in *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church*, vol. 3, ed. Bronwyn Neil, Geoffrey D. Dunn, and Lawrence Cross (Sydney: St Paul’s Publications, 2003), pp. 75-81.

¹⁵¹ “Psalm 122.2,” in *WSA* 111/20, p. 30.

¹⁵² “Psalm 123.6,” in *WSA*, 111/20, p. 48.

¹⁵³ See *The Trinity*, Forward to Books IX-XIV, *WSA*, I/5, pp. 258-269; 262. Augustine’s anthropology is explained in some detail in Edmund Hill’s translation of *The Trinity* I am indebted to Hill’s very helpful

volitional and affective as well as cognitive.”¹⁵⁴ In common with Edwards’ usage, the term “heart” is often interchanged with the soul or mind (*mens*)¹⁵⁵ in Augustine’s thinking to represent the cognitive and affective capacities of the inner life. Sometimes he tends to associate reason or understanding with the mind as the intellectual faculty as distinct from the affective aspect of human psychology. On other occasions, following the Pauline distinction,¹⁵⁶ Augustine refers to the “inner man” when speaking of the rational soul.¹⁵⁷ While the mind with its capacity for reason and understanding is vitally important in Augustine’s anthropology, it is far more common for Augustine to look for God and to find God not in the mind, but in his heart.

That the heart is the “most inner point (*intus*) at the centre of a human being” in Augustine’s use of “heart” is supported by Kazuhiko Demura, who finds that Augustine sees the heart as the place for God’s presence in his life and the point of contact for fellow believers.¹⁵⁸ In Augustine’s thinking the heart is in the closest possible relationship with God. “You are going back to God from the nearest possible place” says Augustine, “if you have gone back to your heart.”¹⁵⁹ The heart is certainly more than just the seat of the affections as the spring of all activity.

diagrammatic portrayal of Augustine’s complex use of psychological terminology. Plato and Plotinus both declare this longing, but theirs is more of a human response to the idea of God rather than a response of the heart to the love and condescension of God himself in the person of the Holy Spirit in the heart who gives knowledge of Jesus Christ. In Hill’s schema, Augustine’s architecture of the soul is hierarchical, based on a division of the soul into the higher, inner man and the lower, outer man

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 262. It is the upper portion of the *mens* that is the home of *sapientia*, wisdom as the contemplation of eternal truth. At one level below in the *mens* is the home of *scientia*, knowledge of the sensible world, rational judgment or factual knowledge. Imagination, sensuality and sensation are all the province of the lower, outer man, and vastly inferior in his anthropology. Augustine is vitally concerned with the rational mind for it is here, the pinnacle of humanity’s inner life, that he looks for and finds the image of God, albeit an imperfect image. A. Marxsein, *Augustinus* 3 (1958), pp. 323-330, describes the heart for Augustine in objective and subjective terms as the place where we perceive truth and cling to it.

¹⁵⁵ Edgardo de la Peza, *El Significado de “Cor” en San Augustin* (Paris: *Etudes Augustiniennes*, 1962), p. 80. Edgardo de la Peza argues that Augustine’s understanding of “heart” retains the full spectrum of biblical nuances and encompasses the whole interiority of the person in a way that aligns the heart with the life principle itself. “The heart, in Augustine’s vocabulary, generally refers to the interior man as active, to the dynamism specific to the rational soul (*mens*) as in exercise and focused upon truly human acts.”

¹⁵⁶ Romans 7:22; 2 Corinthians 4:16, and Ephesians 3:16.

¹⁵⁷ *The City of God*, XIII, 24, pp. 541-546. “man is not merely a body or merely a soul, but a being constituted by body and soul together. This is indeed true, for the soul is not the whole man; it is the better part of man, and the body is not the whole man; it is the lower part of him.”

¹⁵⁸ Kazuhiko Demura, “‘Cor Nostrum’ in the *Confessions* of St Augustine,” in *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church*, Vol. 2, eds. Pauline Allen, Wendy Mayer and Lawrence Cross (Brisbane, 1999), p. 194.

¹⁵⁹ “Sermon 311.13,” in *WSA*, 111/9, p. 77. (PL 38, col. 1418) : “De proximo enim redis ad Deum, si redieris ad cor tuum.”

The range of meanings and activities that he attributes to the heart is considerable. The heart loves,¹⁶⁰ is wounded,¹⁶¹ desires,¹⁶² knows,¹⁶³ speaks,¹⁶⁴ listens,¹⁶⁵ perceives,¹⁶⁶ acts¹⁶⁷ and is acted upon.¹⁶⁸ In what is a clear indication of the priority of the heart in Augustine's picture of the interiority of the spiritual life is an observation in the *Confessions* that no-one really knows who he is apart from God, because "their ear is not attuned to my heart at the point where I am, whatever I am" (*cor meum, ubi ego sum quicumque sum*).¹⁶⁹ The epicentre of his whole existence as a human being created in the image of God is his heart, which incorporates his intellect and understanding as well as love and desire because it is actively involved in communication. God speaks "not to the ear, but to the heart" (*non in aure sed in corde*),¹⁷⁰ and Augustine replies with his heart's voice, including confession with his heart.¹⁷¹ "We know for certain" he says, "that the heart has a mouth and the heart has a tongue."

He goes on in the same exposition of Psalm 125 to accord the heart oversight of the entire person. If the "mouth of the heart" is free from evil, then everything else will be free from evil because "the heart that controls them is a righteous commander."¹⁷² On another occasion, he suggests a cognitive dimension to the heart in his exhortation for patience so that "the facts may be recalled to the hearts" of those who have forgotten that they are members of the one body of Christ.¹⁷³ Even when a man is thinking, "the man who is thinking is of course uttering in his heart" which also has a mouth as Augustine notes in

¹⁶⁰ *The Trinity*, VIII, 10, p. 252. (CCSL 50. 284). Quoting Romans 5:5, Augustine says, "Quoniam caritas dei diffusa est in cordibus nostris per spiritum sanctum qui datus est nobis..."

¹⁶¹ *Confessions*, X. 41. 66, p. 218. (CCSL 27, 191). "Vidi enim splendorem tuum corde saucio et percussus dixi..."

¹⁶² "Sermon 65A.3," in *WSA*, 111/111, p. 191.

¹⁶³ "Sermon 77A.4," in *WSA*, 111/111, p. 329. (PLS 2, col. 652). "Habeamus cor sapientem."

¹⁶⁴ *Confessions*, II, 4. 9, p. 29. (CCSL 27, 22). "Dicat tibi nunc esse cor meum, quod ibi quaerebat..."

¹⁶⁵ "Sermon 62A.4," in *WSA*, 111/111, p. 171. (PLS 2 col. 674). "Sed felix est, cui intus inperat, non in aure carnis, sed in aure cordis..."

¹⁶⁶ "Sermon 23.1," in *WSA*, 111/11, p. 56. (CCSL 41, 309). "Ipse ad intellectum clariorem assumat corda uestra..."

¹⁶⁷ *Confessions*, I. 15. 24, p. 17, (CCSL 27, 13). "et amem te ualidissime et amplexer manum tuam totis praccordiis meis."

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, I. 17. 27, p. 20, (CCSL 27, 15) "Laudes tuae, domine, laudes tuae per scriptural tuas suspernerent ... palmitem cordis mei"

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, X. 3.4, p. 181, (CCSL 27, 156). "sed auris eorum non est ad cor meum, ubi ego sum quicumque sum."

¹⁷⁰ "Sermon 11.2," in *WSA*, 111/1, p. 294. (CCSL 41, 162).

¹⁷¹ For examples of the heart listening see *Confessions* 1.5.5, IV.5.10, IV.11.16, IV.15.27. For references to the heart speaking see V. 2. 2, IX.12.29.

¹⁷² "Psalm 125. 7-8," in *WSA*, III/20, pp. 75-76.

¹⁷³ "Psalm 123.1," in *WSA*, III/20, p. 43.

connection with Mt. 15:11.¹⁷⁴ Augustine speaks of the perceiving heart in the case of Isaac, whose physical blindness was no obstacle to seeing the truth for “the eyes of his heart were able to see the sublimity of the mysteries” unfolding in his life. The Manichees, on the other hand, are “blind men” whose “blindness of heart must be shown up.”¹⁷⁵

As one caught up in the workings of his inner life, love is an important *leit-motiv* of Augustine’s interest in the heart. John O’Meara contends that “love, mental and physical is, indeed, the great motivation in Augustine’s life.”¹⁷⁶ The love of truth and wisdom inspired his search for God, and Augustine’s heart is characterized by a longing for the truth that is God even after conversion.¹⁷⁷ His search for spiritual knowledge is inclined far more by love of wisdom than by wisdom itself which had proved to be a dead end. Augustine is the great seeker after God, and seeking God requires the yearning heart. Only those who hunger for God will be found by God. In his studies in John’s Gospel Augustine writes of the intense longing which characterizes the heart of the Christian pilgrim; it is one that all lovers know:

Give me a man that loves, and he feels what I say. Give me one that longs; one that hungers, one that is travelling in this wilderness, and thirsting and panting after the fountain of his eternal home; give such, and he knows what I say. But if I speak to the cold and indifferent, he knows not what I say.¹⁷⁸

Augustine viewed the heart’s longing for God as God inspired, and it is seen in the restless desire for completion in something beyond itself, a view that is not confined to the Christian world of late antiquity but is also there in Edwards’ eighteenth century New England world. In typically Platonic fashion Augustine urges his congregation to “ascend in the heart” to God, by which he means that they should think of God, love him, and so draw near to him.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ *The Trinity*, XV. 17, *WSA*, p. 408. (CCSL, 50A, 484). “in corde suo dicit utique qui cogitat.”

¹⁷⁵ “Sermon 12.3,” in *WSA*, III/1, p. 299. (CCSL, 41, 167).

¹⁷⁶ John J. O’Meara, *Understanding Augustine* (Great Britain, Four Courts Press, 1997), p. 38. Oliver O’Donovan differentiates between Augustine’s use of *dilectio*, *amor*, and *caritas*, in Ch. I, *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 10-36.

¹⁷⁷ The “*Soliloquies*,” 1. 6- 7, in *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, trans. J. H. S. Burleigh (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), pp. 26-27. “I desire to know God and the soul.”

¹⁷⁸ “Tractate XXVI. 4, in *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, *NPNF*, vol. VII, p. 169. The erotic nuances to Augustine’s passionate desire for a vision of God reappear in Sermon 23. 16, “Our true longing, our passion, our love, should be inflamed by this earnest with desire for what Moses was on fire for he said to the one he already saw “Show yourself to me.” *WSA*, III/2, p. 64.

¹⁷⁹ “Psalm 22.3,” in *WSA*, III/20, p. 31.

Original sin has decreed that the heart is not necessarily the repository of all that is good, and there are many occasions when Augustine refers to the human heart as wounded or sick. He locates the fundamental propensity to sin in the heart: “the hands follow the heart’s lead” (*cor suum sequuntur manus*),¹⁸⁰ he tells his congregation in a sermon dealing with the origins of sinful behaviour. The sinful heart is “darkened” (*obscuratum*),¹⁸¹ “twisted” (*distortum*),¹⁸² and “crooked” (*peruerso*),¹⁸³ very much in need of healing. Humanity is wounded through its identification with Adam and of all the workings of God in the heart, God as healer, and that means converter, takes precedence for Augustine.¹⁸⁴

1.7 The Conversion of the Heart:

i. Augustine’s Confessions

While the unity of the *Confessions* is not under question, for the purposes of this thesis I intend to focus on Books I to IX of the *Confessions* since they contain Augustine’s spiritual and physical peregrinations up to the moment of conversion. Books X and XI delve into the place of memory and time in Augustine’s search for clues to his identity and relationship to God. Books Twelve and Thirteen outline some of his thoughts on the interpretation of the creation narrative in Chapter One of Genesis, in some respects a recapitulation of his own spiritual creation *ex nihilo*.

The title of Augustine’s spiritual autobiography establishes the subjective nature of his undertaking as confessions are intrinsically self-revealing, usually of inadequacies and failings. As a technical term in Augustine’s thinking, *confessio* involves three strands of meaning: admission of sin, (*confessio peccatorum*), praise of God, (*confessio laudis*), and declaration of faith (*confessio fidei*).¹⁸⁵ All three strands

¹⁸⁰ “Psalm 57. 4,” in WSA, III/17, p. 125. (CCSL 39, 710).

¹⁸¹ “Psalm 57. 18,” *ibid.*, p. 140. (CCSL 39, 724).

¹⁸² “Psalm 63.18,” *ibid.*, p. 261. (CCSL 39, 820). “Distortum est cor tuum.”

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 262. (CCSL 39, 821). “peruerso corde et distorto est...”

¹⁸⁴ Martin, *Our Restless Heart*, pp. 31-33. One of Augustine’s favourite Christological titles is *Christus medicus*, the one who alone can heal the heart of a lost sinner.

¹⁸⁵ J. O’Donnell, *Confessions II, Commentary on Books 1-7*, (Clarendon Press New York 1992), pp. 3-7. O’Donnell notes that *confiteor* and *confessio* occur 111 times in *Confessions*. See also Sermon, 67:2 where Augustine refers to confession as “accusation of self and praise of God.” Gary Wills’ recent biography of Augustine prefers to speak of the “Testimony” rather than the *Confessions* on the basis that *confessio* has more to do with “bearing witness to” than confession of sins. Gary Wills, *Saint Augustine*, Penguin Lives (USA: Viking Books, 1999) xiv-xvi. Maria Boulding in her translation of the *Confessions* sees three levels of confession: confession of sin, confession of God’s glory and confession of the need for grace. *The Confessions*, trans. Maria Boulding, WSA, 1/1, pp. 24-25. See the

appear in this work as the narrative unfolds. It is a blueprint for a conversion narrative whose main features are recapitulated by Edwards. Only the scale of the enterprise is larger in Augustine's *Confessions*. Both recollections rely on the uneven progress of the heart in the spiritual life, but the glory in the conversion account belongs entirely to God.

As a revelation of the process of conversion seen from the perspective of the heart's longing,¹⁸⁶ the *Confessions* is unique in the world of late antiquity. Such is the evocative power of his description of his own spiritual, intellectual and philosophical journeying that Augustine before and after conversion becomes our contemporary in a manner not found in Edwards. Augustine is something of a postmodern, fragmented individual, but one whose spiritual perspectives are shaped by the realities of the world of late antiquity rather than those of the twenty first century. One analysis has thirteen other conversion stories in the *Confessions* including those of his friends Alypius, Victorinus and Anthony.¹⁸⁷ This is in marked contrast to Edwards' account which is wholly taken up with his own story. In both cases, however, the paradigm for conversion is similar.

The two most recent scholarly biographies of Augustine offer opposing assessments of Augustine's voice in his account of his conversion in the *Confessions*, but both see it as a work centered on the heart.¹⁸⁸ J. J. O'Donnell asserts that conversion for Augustine is as Peter Brown depicted it some forty years before, a

article on conversion in *Augustinus Lexikon*, vol. 2, pp. 1282-1294. Madec attributes Augustine's use of *auersio*, *peruersio* and *conuersio* to Neoplatonic influences. (p. 1286).

¹⁸⁶ See the collection of essays *The Hunger of the Heart: Reflections on the Confessions of Augustine*, Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Monograph Series, Number 8, ed. Donald Capps and James E. Dittes (West Lafayette, 1990).

¹⁸⁷ Frederick Van Fleteren, in Joseph C. Schnaubelt and Frederick Van Fleteren, eds., "St Augustine's Theory of Conversion," in *Augustine: Second Founder of the Faith*, (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), pp. 65-80.

¹⁸⁸ O'Connell, *Augustine: Sinner and Saint*, p. 69. See also Serge Lancel, *St Augustine*, pp. 96-97. While there is an element of truth in James O'Donnell's reading insofar as Augustine's recollections are highly selective, it is going too far to claim that "the man who lived in Africa and who had written the *Confessions*...was no longer the man of the *Confessions*, and that was Augustine's tragedy." That Augustine made errors of judgment and embodied the usual flaws common to all humanity is no reason to view his post-conversion world-view as essentially "tragic." O'Donnell argues that Augustine's final conversion in the garden in Milan is "too well constructed to be quite believable." Lancel does not adopt such an ascerbic tone with reference to the *Confessions*. He is happy to allow for a mix of historicity and gloss in the re-telling of Augustine's conversion, while supporting Isobel Bochet's view that the conversion scene in the garden of Milan is not fictitious but the product of "a fundamental interaction between spiritual experience and theological reflection." See also Isobel Bochet, "*Le Livre VIII des Confessions: recit de conversion et reflexion theologique*", in *Nouv. Revue theol.*, 118, (1996), pp. 363-384."

process of “hardening the will”¹⁸⁹ rather than softening the heart. Serge Lancel is somewhat kinder in seeing the work as that of “spiritual communion,” a work of the heart of one who passionately desired to place his experience of conversion at the service of other seekers, an assessment that is certainly pertinent to Edwards’ “Personal Narrative.”¹⁹⁰

Augustine’s lifelong preoccupation with finding truth and his desire to tell the truth “in my heart before you in confession, but before many witnesses with my pen,”¹⁹¹ militates against claims that he embroidered his recollections of the journey to faith. That is not to say that the *Confessions* is not constructed carefully and selectively in an artistic way to shape the narrative purpose of his heart’s journey in tandem with his physical wanderings in search of wisdom. Augustine’s body followed his heart’s leading in search of God. In the period during which he wrote his *Confessions*, (397-401), memory is a “vast palace”¹⁹² for Augustine to explore the labyrinth of his past for traces of God’s presence, and mindful of his critics, he says to God, “I also, Lord, so make my confession to you that I may be heard by people to whom I cannot prove that my confession is true. But those whose ears are opened by love believe me.”¹⁹³ Augustine brings before his readers the life of his own wounded heart with the hope that others will escape the despair of the unconverted heart. “When the confession of these past sins are read and heard, they rouse up the heart and prevent it from sinking into the sleep of despair.”¹⁹⁴ If Augustine’s heart can be converted, how much more the hearts of other sinners?

If Edwards valued the conversion of the heart as the decisive initiation into the most intimate relationship between God and humanity, so too did Augustine.¹⁹⁵ The

¹⁸⁹ Peter Brown, “A Servant of God at the End of Time,” *University Publishing* 9 (1980), p. 3.

¹⁹⁰ Lancel, *St Augustine*, p. 212.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, X. 1. 1, p. 179.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, X. 8. 12, p. 185.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, X, 3. 3, p. 180.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *Confessions*, IV. 16. 31, p. 71. In classical Latin, and in Augustine’s works, *conuersio* and *conuertere* indicate the act of returning or becoming, or the act of change, be it physical or material. At the end of Book Four, Augustine compares his life to that of the prodigal son as seen in three acts: a wandering away (*auersi*), a period of sin (*peruersi*), and then a return to God (*reuertamur*), in order not to be condemned (*euertamur*). He writes “Our good is life with you forever, and because we turned away (*auersi sumus*), we became twisted (*peruersi sumus*). Let us now return (*reuertamur*) to you so that we might not be overturned (*euertamur*).” The variety of meanings stems from the Greek words *epistrephein* and *epistrophe* whose stem *strephe* indicates verbs of motion, most specifically in the

importance of the heart in Augustine's understanding of conversion is obvious from its frequent occurrences in his narrative. The word *cor* appears in the first and last chapters of the *Confessions* and nearly two hundred times in between, including more than seventy times as *cor meum*.¹⁹⁶ The heart's dominion in the interior life of the mind or soul supplies Augustine with his raw material for the *Confessions* because the heart is where Augustine knows and experiences God and where he believes God speaks to him, loves him and sustains his spiritual life. Here is the story of a heart on a quest to find God, a heart which was always a restless heart, a yearning heart, a fractured heart. Augustine's heart is one of the main characters in the story. Everything that happens to Augustine is related to God's intervention in his life and his heart's response.

All of Augustine's musings on his own conversion in the *Confessions* encompass the interrelatedness of his heart, mind, and will as he struggles towards a clear understanding of the relationship between the individual heart and God, given his belief in the absolute goodness of God and the inherent sinfulness of man. In the *Retractions*, he claims that "The thirteen books of my Confessions praise the just and good God for my evil and good acts, and lift up the understanding and affection (that is, the hearts), of men to him."¹⁹⁷ Like Edwards, Augustine is anxious to convince his readers that his whole life, including the final conversion experience itself, is dependent on the grace of God who alone can "justify the ungodly."¹⁹⁸

Writing from the vantage point of his position as Bishop of Hippo, the *Confessions* was written over three years when Augustine was between forty-three and forty-seven years of age (397-401), some eleven years after his conversion to Christianity in 386. He shares with Edwards the preoccupations of a middle aged man analyzing his deepest feelings when a young man, and there is no sentimentalizing of his self portrayal. God is addressed throughout, and although Augustine does mention his audience at times, the focus is almost entirely on Augustine's conversation with God.

sense of changing direction, returning, or making a return, to convert or to convert oneself, with the connotation of shifting one's patterns of thinking to adopt a new position.

¹⁹⁶ In the *Confessions*, the term *cor* occurs 184 times, including *cor meum* (76), and *cor nostrum* (8), *praecordia* (3), *recordari* and *recordatio* (36). Quoted in Eric Jager, "The Book of the Heart," p 6. CETEDOC. Library of Christian Latin Texts (Turnhout, 1991).

¹⁹⁷ *Retractions*, Ch. 32, *FC*, vol. 60, p.130.

¹⁹⁸ *Confessions*, X. 2.2, p. 178.

One of the more distinctive aspects of Augustine's conversion narrative, and one that is found in Edwards is the passionate way in which he engages his readers with the narration of his heart's wanderings in his journey towards God. There is the same introspective self-scrutiny of the pilgrim heart that characterizes Edwards' "Personal Narrative," the same single minded devotion to retrospective analysis of the relationship between God and the searching heart. In some respects Augustine's heart is filled with "existential angst" to use a twentieth century term somewhat anachronistically. Like Edwards, Augustine's revelation of his heart's confusion is imbued with a Pascalian disquiet which never really leaves him. The rhetoric of quest throughout the *Confessions* reflects the poignant yearning of the *cor inquietum* to see God and to cling fast to God in order to enjoy God.¹⁹⁹

The *Confessions* is much longer than Edwards' "Personal Narrative," but the basic structure is the same with the main focus on the changed heart as a result of incorporation into the divine Trinitarian life driving the narrative. The presence of Christ in the heart through the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit is the Trinitarian *sine qua non* for conversion in Augustine's Trinitarian theology as it was for Edwards.²⁰⁰ Conversion in Augustine's eyes is tantamount to a restructuring of the heart from an inward-looking, segregated love of self to love of self and others in the love of God's triune beauty and holiness.

Peter Brown, Augustine's definitive biographer, subtitles the *Confessions* "the story of Augustine's "heart," or of his "feelings," (*affectus*)²⁰¹ a judgment with which few would disagree and which clearly anticipates Edwards' "Personal Narrative."²⁰² It is a "warts and all" depiction of the vagaries of adolescence and the gradual disenchantment of the weary pilgrim who moves from one failed hope to another in

¹⁹⁹ *Confessions*, X. 17. 26, p. 194. (CCSL 27, 169). "uolens te attingere, unde attingi potes, et inhaerere tibi, inde inhaereri tibi potest."

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, IV. 12. 19, p. 64. "He who for us is life itself descended here and endured our death and slew it by the abundance of his life. In a thunderous voice he called us to return to him...And he has gone from our sight that we should 'return to our heart' and find him there."

²⁰¹ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, p. 169.

²⁰² James J. O'Donnell, *Augustine: Sinner and Saint*, pp. 51-54, 57. O'Donnell claims that Augustine deliberately set out to mislead his readers by minimizing the extent of his exposure to Christianity up until his arrival in Milan. His conversion, if it could be called that, was simply "discovering that Christianity was not what he had thought it was." According to O'Donnell, Ambrose merely helped Augustine to see that philosophy and Christianity could co-exist in the form of a Neoplatonic Christianity. Augustine's abandonment of Christianity as an eighteen year old is decisive despite his constant preoccupation with finding God. It is a paradigm for *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu*, not simply conversion to an "intellectually respectable Christianity."

his search for God. In this he differs from Edwards who remained firmly within the Christian fold but who often felt that he had an inadequate apprehension of God's love and whose experience of God was largely intellectual before the upheaval in his heart.

Alongside regrets for past sins are outpourings of praise and thanksgiving to God for changing Augustine's heart and helping him to persevere along the way of holiness. There is the search for wisdom and God, sinful excursions into forbidden territory, remorse, repentance and finally a climactic conversion experience accompanied by intense emotional feelings of love, joy and delight in God. Like Edwards, Augustine experiences conversion as sweetness in the heart, a sweetness he prays to be enlarged in his heart so that he can overcome the seductions of the transient pleasures he has struggled with for so long.²⁰³ In both cases, years of trying to live a holy life bring with them later admissions of failure and the need for continual repentance.

Though it is true that there is a great deal to be learned about Augustine's life and spiritual journey in the *Confessions*, much more so than in Edwards' spiritual autobiography, it is also true that the omissions are startling. In his efforts to chart the progress of his heart, Augustine ensures that theological emphases outweigh the minutiae of everyday life. His memories are ransacked and chosen for their relevance to his "confession" of being an erstwhile prodigal son whose return to God is a journey of the heart. Large slabs of his life are passed over quickly or omitted altogether, so that for example there is no mention of his first few years as a priest. There are gaps in the chronology and omissions of what many would consider important information about family and life experiences. Apart from his mother Monica, there are few references to his father, his long-time partner, or his son Adeodatus. Like Edwards, Augustine's intentions in writing are to discover God in the hiddenness of his past, rather than to dwell on the more mundane particulars of his life. Augustine searched for patterns in his life but before conversion could not fathom the seeming absences of God. Augustine becomes the archetype for the struggling sinner who lives with the confusion engendered by hearts "that are kept to

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 1. 15. 24., p. 17.

themselves” and are “pulled this way and that by toys and trifles and wanton destructive loves.”²⁰⁴

Of all the reasons that can be adduced as to his rationale for writing the *Confessions*, Augustine himself puts forward as his main reason his desire to arouse love for God in his own heart and in that of others. It is God’s prior command that Augustine make confession to him: “I tell my story for love of your love.”²⁰⁵ His conversion is all about love, human and divine, which finds its home in the heart.

His post-conversion view of God’s sovereignty meant that God was involved in every single event of life so Augustine is looking back to discern God’s presence in his past life, knowing that like the prodigal son, his heart had been separated from God for years. He attributes his conversion, the bridging of that gulf between his heart and God, to the intervention of a loving God who had not left him to continue in folly, but who patiently guided him “in your hidden, secret providence” (*abdito secreto prouidentiae tuae*),²⁰⁶ until conversion in a garden in Milan.²⁰⁷ The converted Augustine examines his spiritual odyssey in order to reassure himself that God has been present even in the darker moments of the journey.²⁰⁸

While Augustine acknowledges that it was his readings of the *libri platoniorum*²⁰⁹ that directed him to turn from the exterior world of the senses to the interior life of the heart in order to find God, well before he read the Neoplatonists he was preoccupied with the gap between desire and fulfillment in human life. His most persistent desire is to find Wisdom, but his search is thwarted at every turn. Augustine’s analysis of his tortuous journey to faith leads him to conclude that he is a

²⁰⁴ “Sermon 34.7,” in *WSA*, 111/11, pp. 168-169. (CCSL 41, 426).

²⁰⁵ *Confessions*, XI, I, 1, p. 221. (CCSL, 27, 194). : “sed affectum meum excito in te et eorum, qui haec legunt...amore amoris tui facio istuc.” “But I am stirring up love for you in myself and in those who read this...”

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, V, 6, 11, p. 79. (CCSL, 27, 62-63).

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, III. 4. 8, p. 39.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, IV. 3. 5, p. 55. In this episode Augustine recounts a meeting with a wise man who weans him away from astrology. He sees this encounter as one example of God’s intervention to bring healing to his soul. Again and again the questions recur. Why did this happen? Where were you God while I was searching amongst the philosophers? Often he re-phrases the question to “Where was I when I was seeking for you? And he answers it himself in psychological terms that are modern in their insight. “You were there before me but I had departed from myself. I could not even find myself, much less you.” V. 2. 2, p. 73. (CCSL, 27, 58). “Et ubi ergo eram, quando te quaerebam? Et tu eras ante me, ego autem et a me discesseram nec me inueniebam: quanto minus te!”

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, VII. 9. 13, p.121, (CCSL, 27, 101). “procurasti mihi per quondam hominem immanissimo typho turgidum quosdam Platoniorum libros ex graeca lingua in latinam uersos.” Augustine read Plotinus and his disciple Porphyry in the translations of Marius Victorinus.

mystery to himself because of the fragmented nature of his loves that come from a divided heart. "How does it come about that various kinds of love are felt in a single soul with different degrees of weight?"²¹⁰ His aspiration to obtain a vision of God is thwarted by the weight of his sins which drag his heart downwards to a realm of lesser loves and beings. Estrangement from God is the result of *superbia*, and it is this basic orientation of the heart that inhibits conversion in the first instance and which renders the Christian pilgrimage erratic.²¹¹

At the beginning of the *Confessions* he laments his boyhood flight from God to immersion in the sensible world.²¹² His mistake was to look outside of himself, and in so doing, "I failed to find 'the God of my heart'" (*Deus cordis mei*).²¹³ As a young man Augustine's inner life was chaotic as he pursued goals which only made him unhappy. It was a life that saw his heart at the "bottom of the abyss" of sinful pleasure as an adolescent.²¹⁴ Failure to abstain from the pleasures of the world results in the enjoyment of impure pleasures and spiritual death "for you (God) are the life-giving pleasure of a pure heart."²¹⁵ Any sense of self was splintered and incoherent, a

²¹⁰ *Confessions*, IV. 14. 22, p. 66. (CCSL, 27, 51). "Vbi distribuunt ista pondera uariorum et diuersorum amorum in anima una?" Again, like Edwards, Augustine sees the creation characterized at all levels by change. God "is ceaselessly at work in his creation" and life is defined by "becoming." "The Literal Meaning of Genesis," IV. 12. 22-23, in *WSA*, I/13, pp. 253-254. Augustine's world is sustained by God's power from moment to moment. Central to Augustine's thinking on creation is the notion of "weight." His concept of "weight" as the determinant of movement as everything seeks its own place of rest in the universe is an interesting complement to Edwards' notion of disposition. As far as Augustine is concerned, everything in the creation is arranged according to measure, number and weight, and tends to harmony when at rest in God, but perfect rest is unattainable in this life. See also, "The Literal Meaning of Genesis," III. 25. 16; IV. 3.7.-6.12. in *WSA*, I/13, pp. 245-249. In the case of humans, weight is driven by desire, whether good or bad. "My weight is my love," says Augustine in the *Confessions*, in itself an admission that life is not static since love is ever changing and dynamic. When it comes to the restless heart seeking God, the heart is always a longing heart for both Augustine and Edwards. *Confessions*, VII. 17. 23, p. 127; XIII. 9. 10, p. 278.

²¹¹ "The Literal Meaning of Genesis," XI. 15. 19, in *WSA*, I/13, p. 439. Augustine writes "rightly has scripture designated pride as the beginning of all sin."

²¹² Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, pp. 32-33. While nominally from a Christian family, he came from the petty gentry in Thagaste, a provincial backwater whose Christianity was as much influenced by Greek and Punic demonism as by New Testament theology.

²¹³ *Confessions*, VI. 1. 1, p. 90. (CCSL, 27, 73). "Et ambulabam per tenebras et lubricum et quaerebam te foris a me et non inueniebam deum cordis mei"

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, II. 4. 9, p. 29. See also I.20.31. p. 22. (CCSL, 27, 17). "My sin consisted in this, that I sought pleasure, sublimity and truth not in God but in his creatures, in myself and other created beings." "Hoc enim peccabam, quod non in ipso, sed in creaturis eius me atque ceteris uoluptates, sublimitates, ueritates quaerebam, atque ita inruebam in dolores, confusiones, errores."

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, XIII, 21. 29, p. 290. (CCSL, 27, 258). "At uero anima uiua de terra sumit exordium, quia non prodest nisi iam fidelibus continere se ab amore huius saeculi, ut anima eorum tibi uiuat, quae mortua erat in deliciis uiuens, deliciis, domine, mortiferis; nam tu puri cordis uitales deliciae."

state he described as being “turned from unity in you [God] to be lost in multiplicity.”

²¹⁶ His lifelong pursuit of wisdom was distracted by ambition, fame and sensuality.

The problem, he decides in hindsight is his heart, which until conversion, and even after, is disordered or sinful, a state he describes as being “ruined” (*ruinosa*).²¹⁷ The consequence of a “ruined” heart is the distortion of love which places all hope in transitory things. Original sin, the abiding condition of the human race since the Fall has altered the disposition of the heart and all are in need of conversion. The sinful heart is now disposed to love substitutes for God more than God himself, and that love is doomed to disappointment because of the inadequacy of human love. Augustine’s depiction of the two loves that are diametrically opposed “one holy, the other unclean,” one God-centred and social, the other private and selfish, was to find an echo in Edwards’ condemnation of the private loves that “don’t arise from any temper of benevolence to Being in general.”²¹⁸

That he had wandered far from God on the journey is mentioned several times in the *Confessions*,²¹⁹ and in applying to himself the imagery of the prodigal son, the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the parable of the Good Samaritan, Augustine wants his readers to know just how alienated from God his pre-conversion life was.²²⁰ He is the archetypal prodigal son, the lonely wanderer, the heart in odyssey, *peregrinatio*.²²¹ Throughout his search for religious certitude he remains a seeker after truth, convinced that there is a God but unable to accommodate his philosophical doubts either to a simplistic version of Christianity, the myths of the Manichees or the wisdom of the Greek and Latin philosophers.

The realisation that he can find no rest in worldly pleasures and that the only changes he can make are external cause him great anguish. He cites the example of

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, II. 1. 1., p. 24. “dum ab uno te versus in multa evanui”

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, I. 5. 6., p. 6, (CCSL, 27, 3).

²¹⁸ “The Literal Interpretation of Genesis,” XI. 15. 20, in *WSA*, 1/13, pp. 439-440. See also “True Virtue,” in *Works*, 8, p. 610.

²¹⁹ See for example, *Confessions*, I. 20. 31, p. 23; II. 1. 1., p. 24; III. 3. 5., p. 37; III. 6. 11., p. 42.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, VIII. 3. 6, p. 137. Here Augustine is using the conversion of Marius Victorinus to expound a general principle of conversion, namely, that great joy is occasioned by repentance. See also III. 6. 11., p. 42.

²²¹ J. O’Connell, *St Augustine’s Confessions: The Odyssey of Soul*, p. 15. O’Connell depicts Augustine’s soul wanderings as akin to that of a Plotinian soul seeking happiness in “the beatifying embrace of Truth, the Son of God.” T. Kermit Scott depicts Augustine’s journey as a series of “myths”: the Original, the Manichaean, the Plotinian and finally the Imperial. T. Kermit Scott, *Augustine: His Thought in Context* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995).

the death of a close friend where he discovers that in the throes of grief he can flee his home town with its memories of lost love, but he cannot flee his own heart.²²² The heart of those who are far from God is such that “we each carry our own heart along in the journey of our bodily life, and every heart is shut against every other.”²²³ The only cure for such separation and fragmentation of hearts is continence, the gathering together of the disparate elements of the self through incorporation into the divine Trinitarian life and love.²²⁴ Self-imposed continence in its broad sense is not possible for the sinful heart. Only in offering the heart to God is continence attainable. “If we pay attention to God” he reassures his congregation, “if we hold out ourselves with all our hearts for treatment, we shall be all healed.”²²⁵

The sovereignty of God is crucial to Augustine’s conversion as it was for Edwards. Conversion is not self-originating but depends on God’s mercy in opening the “closed heart.”²²⁶ It is God who draws sinners to praise by stirring the desires of the heart. “You stir man to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”²²⁷ His experience of the *cor inquietum* is that of Edwards. Augustine’s perception of conversion is that it is a radical change from the heart “that is lost in its own imagined ideas”²²⁸ to the heart that is “aroused in the love of your mercy and the sweetness of your grace,”²²⁹ one predicated on the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ “the immortal righteous one.”²³⁰ Augustine’s observation that it was the name of Christ that propelled his restless heart to keep searching is a retrospective judgment written from the vantage point of one

²²² *Ibid.*, III, 3. 4-5., pp. 37-38. (CCSL 27, 29). “My stiff neck took me further and further away from you. I loved my own ways, not yours. The liberty I loved was merely that of a runaway.” To Gerard Manley Hopkins, Augustine’s conversion was gradual in contrast to that of Paul. Conversion both melts the heart and gives God mastery of it, “Whether at once, as once at a crash Paul, Or as Austin, a lingering-out sweet skill,” partly as a result of Ambrose’s preaching. “The Wreck of the Deutschland,” Part the First, 10, in *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Selection of His Finest Poems* ed. Catherine Phillips, Oxford Poetry Library (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 100.

²²³ “Psalm 55.9,” in *WSA*, III/17, p. 90. (CCSL 39, 684). “in hac peregrinatione carnis uitae quisque cor suum portat, et omne cor omni cordi clausum est.”

²²⁴ *Confessions*, X. 29. 40, p. 202. “By continence we are collected together and brought to the unity from which we disintegrated into multiplicity... You command continence; grant what you command, and command what you will.” (CCSL 27, 176). “Per continentiam quippe colligimur et redigimur in unum, a quo in multa defluximus... Continentiam iubet: da quod iubet et iube quod vis.”

²²⁵ “Sermon 32.1,” in *WSA*, III/11, p. 137. (CCSL 41, 398.). Hill omits “heart” in his translation.

²²⁶ *Confessions*, V. 1. 1, p. 72.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, I. 1. 1, p. 3.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, V. 4, 7, p. 75.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, X. 3. 4, p. 180.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, X. 43. 68, p. 219. (CCSL, 27, 192).

who is anxious to discover God's presence in the serpentine route through pagan philosophy that his life had taken.

In the recollections of his spiritual journey, Augustine traces the movement of his heart from childhood faith in Book one,²³¹ to the reading of Cicero's *Hortensius* and the books of the Manichaeans in Book three by which time childhood Christian faith has evaporated.²³² Book four ends with a chapter on his first reading of Aristotle's *Categories*, his long involvement with Manichaeism appears in Book five,²³³ followed by a brief flirtation with Skepticism at the end of Book five.²³⁴ There is mention of Epicurus at the end of Book six,²³⁵ his immersion in the works of the Platonists emerges in Book seven²³⁶ and his conversion to Christianity is the culmination in Book eight.²³⁷

Struggling for religious certitude he describes a life fraught with the frustrations of ambivalence which "kept my heart from giving any assent, and in that state of suspended judgement, I was suffering a worse death."²³⁸ It is his heart which must give assent, not his intellect, even if his intellectual doubts disrupt his mind's peace. As each of his intellectual passions wane, his restless heart propels him forward into new beliefs which initially look promising but eventually prove to be disappointing. Unable to find happiness in any of his discoveries, he presses on to find the truth that will re-integrate "the tender vine of my heart" which has been "snatched away by empty trifles."²³⁹

Along with the disenchantment of fading philosophies goes a rising distrust of reason as the way to find God, but it is not until he has exhausted all human

²³¹ *Ibid.*, I, 6, 18, p. 14.

²³² *Ibid.*, III, 4, 7, p. 39.

²³³ *Ibid.*, V, 3, 3, pp. 73-80.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, V, 14, 25, p. 89.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, VI, 16, 26, pp. 109-110.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, VII, 9, 13- X, 16; 20, VII, 20, 26. – VII, 21, 27., pp. 121-124; 129-131.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, VIII, 12, 30, p. 153. *Retractations*, Chapter 32, *FC*, vol. 60, p. 130. Augustine offers the merest hint of his plan for the *Confessions* in his *Retractations*, noting that "From the first to the tenth book, it is about me; in the other three books, it is about the Holy Scriptures..." Books I-IX are semi-autobiographical and composed retrospectively, covering the years from birth up until his thirty-third year, (354-387). In Book X he scrutinizes memory and time in an analysis of his state of mind and heart at the time of writing the *Confessions* (c. 397-401). Books eleven to thirteen explore the creation account in Genesis, one of Augustine's lifelong preoccupations as he comes to grips with the philosophically challenging idea of creation *ex nihilo* and the consequences for the Christian pilgrim.

²³⁸ *Confessions*, VI, 4, 6, pp. 94-95. (CCSL, 27, 77). "tenebam enim cor meum ab omni adsensione timens praecipitium et suspendio magis necabar"

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 17, 27, p. 20. (CCSL 27, 15). "Laudes tuae, domine, laudes tuae per scripturas tuas suspenderent palmitem cordis mei, et non raperetur per inania nugarum turpis praeda uolatilibus."

possibilities in the intellectual sphere, that his heart is free to submit to God. It is a question of coming to the end of himself and his inner resources and being drawn to surrender his will to God's sovereign will, but he cannot do it unaided.

Augustine in the early months of 386 in Milan is almost converted to Catholic Christianity and his turn to the Neoplatonists is crucial in his achievement of a new spiritual apprehension of God and the soul. Lancel calls it his "intellectual conversion"²⁴⁰ as the difficulties he had with the being of God and the existence of evil are resolved. Augustine complains that neither the birth nor death of Christ is to be found in the *libri Platoniorum*, so he does not rest with them.²⁴¹

At this stage in his spiritual journey Augustine claims that he had already accepted the church's teaching about Christ before he was introduced to the Platonists' writings. This is not true conversion he realizes later because his intellectual knowledge does not have the assent of his heart.²⁴² He is even prepared to accept the authority of the Scriptures and the Catholic Church, but the moment of conversion is postponed because of the problems he continued to experience in understanding God's corporeality and the nature of evil. He describes the tension as pushing his "heart to and fro."²⁴³

One significant legacy of his encounter with the Platonists is a turning inwards to contemplate his "innermost citadel" where with God's help as he relates, he has a vision of God's Being that arouses an intense love for God in his heart. It is love that confirms the truth of his first apprehension of God as "eternal truth and true love and beloved eternity," and it leaves him trembling "with love and awe."²⁴⁴ Not only does he love God, but God speaks to Augustine (Ex. 3:14) and he hears "in the way one hears in the heart," that is, with the certainty of love. Augustine is utterly convinced

²⁴⁰ Lancel, *St Augustine*, p. 87.

²⁴¹ *Confessions*, VII. 9. 14, pp. 121-122. He was astonished to see how closely the Neoplatonic teaching resembled the Prologue to John's Gospel. From the books of the Platonists, most notably the *Enneads* of Plotinus, Augustine learnt that the Son as Word is the same form and substance as the Father and eternally co-exists with the Father. He also discovered that the Son emanates from the Father, the illumination of the soul comes from God through the presence of Christ in it, and the notion that all reality exists as an ideal in the mind of God and not in the senses. Beginning with the notion of interiority as the way to reach God, Augustine pays homage to the Neoplatonists for providing him with a non-Manichean solution to the problem associated with "being" as a non-physical substance.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, VII. 5. 7, p. 116. "there was a firm place in my heart for the faith, within the Catholic Church, in your Christ, 'our Lord and Saviour.'" (CCSL 27, 97). "stabiliter tamen haerebat in corde meo in catholica ecclesia fides Christi tui, domini et saluatoris nostri..."

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, VII. 11. 20, p. 106.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, VII. 10. 16, p. 123.

of God's Being and presence, and using words that prefigure his final conversion in the garden in Milan, says "all doubt left me."²⁴⁵ The doubt he is referring to here is that pertaining to God's existence as immutable truth and goodness.

For all that his loves were fragmented, it is probably safe to assume that Augustine, like Edwards, never really lost his childhood belief in the existence of God, a belief he claims his heart imbibed with his mother's milk but stored far away in the recesses of his memory. He recalls that the name of Christ "my Saviour your Son" was never very far from his thoughts and he attributes the cause of his philosophical nomadism to the fact that none of his resting places contained the name of Christ.²⁴⁶ In order to gain the strength to enjoy God, Augustine must embrace Jesus Christ as the way to God, but lack of humility prevents him from acknowledging the incarnation.²⁴⁷ His reading of Paul at this time helped him on his way but he cannot take the final step.

Furthermore, Augustine now knows where he fits into the scheme of things. God is in complete control of the universe; it is Augustine who must change if he is to abide in God and grow. The vision reassures him that all created matter is good: there is no Manichean dualism, and evil is simply the privation of good, not matter itself.²⁴⁸ In an outpouring of praise for the harmonious arrangement of the universe that sees all things in their right place, Augustine adumbrates Edwards' ecstatic reappraisal of the beauty of the creation after his moment of illumination in the *Personal Narrative*. The whole universe is so arranged that all created things, even those that are individually displeasing, become pleasing when considered from the perspective of the whole. Everything is good and gives cause to praise God.²⁴⁹

Still Augustine is not yet fully converted. "By believing I could have been healed," he asserts.²⁵⁰ There is a vast distance between God and his heart, a difference which is qualitative, his inferior, created self eons away from God's uncreated, superior being. It is a difference he does not know how to surmount.²⁵¹

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, III. 4. 8, p. 40.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, VII, 19. 25, p. 128.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, VII. 9. 17 – VII. 13. 19, pp. 124-125.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, VII, 13. 19, p. 125.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, VI. 4. 6, p. 95.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, VII, 10. 16, pp. 123-124. (CCSL 27, 103-104). "O aeterna ueritas et uera caritas et cara aeternitas! Tu es deus meus..."

Peter Brown is of the opinion that this realization shifted “the centre of gravity of Augustine’s spiritual life.”²⁵² While the encounter with the *libri Platoniorum*²⁵³ helped to resolve his last remaining philosophical objections to Christianity by helping him to think of God as immaterial spirit and evil as the privation of good rather than a substance in its own right, it is not enough. He now knows the transcendent God he has encountered in his vision with the knowledge of love, that is heart-knowledge. However, his desire to “attach” himself to God is thwarted by his inability to reconcile the fleeting moment of divine illumination which he is unable to sustain, with God existing in time which is the church’s claim. The weight of his unstable love for sex overcomes his love for God’s beauty and he falls once again, into “inferior things.”²⁵⁴

Augustine himself identifies his heart as that which is the final stumbling block to conversion. Although “your words stuck fast in my heart...my heart needed to be purified from the old leaven.”²⁵⁵ It is clear that Augustine believes that it is the heart that needs converting, but faced with a church which seemed to be dividing into two categories of believers, the celibate who were highly favoured, and the married who were not quite so highly favoured, he remains hesitant. His loves are still disordered. Although marriage was not forbidden for Christian philosophers, Augustine regarded his need for sex as a lesser good, so it is hardly surprising that his heart failed him at this time. He had to renounce some cherished joys if he was to obtain “the good pearl” as he put it.²⁵⁶ Abandoning career and marriage for the ascetic life amounted to a form of death in many eyes. Large numbers of would-be converts (including the emperor Constantine) refused baptism until the very end of their lives for fear of the hardships involved in living the ascetic life of the baptized.

In a departure from Edwards’ use of spiritual exemplars to recommend true conversion to those who questioned its authenticity, at this crucial point in his long journey to faith, it is Augustine who is moved towards conversion by the example of other converts. Marius Victorinus, Anthony, and the unnamed friend of Ponticianus

²⁵² Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, p. 100.

²⁵³ *Confessions*, VII, 9, 13, p. 121. (CCSL, 27, 101). “Platoniorum libros ex graeca lingua in latinam uersos.”

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, VII, 17. 23, p. 127

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, VIII, 1.1, p. 133.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, VIII, 1. 2, p. 134.

each experienced dramatic conversions and he is enthralled with their willingness to make a completely new start. In each case, the heart is the locus for the conversion experience. The steps in Augustine's conversion are the pattern for his friends and exemplars.

ii. Exemplars of Conversion

(a) Marius Victorinus

A visit to Simplicianus, Bishop of Milan, gives Augustine the opportunity to hear of the conversion of Marius Victorinus, a famous rhetor who had translated Plotinus and was one of the leading lights of Neoplatonism before his own conversion. That such an important public figure should in all humility of heart be converted and be baptized caused great joy at the time, especially when as Augustine says, "the conversion of Victorinus' heart" overcame that "impregnable fortress" inhabited by the devil.²⁵⁷ To the "amazement of Rome and the joy of the church" Victorinus joined the ranks of Christians. Because their backgrounds were so similar, Victorinus' conversion narrative impressed Augustine greatly and made him long to renounce the world follow God. To his dismay, even though he is desperate to emulate Victorinus' example, Augustine fails to do so because of his habitual desire (*consuetudo*) for sex. He is unable to choose what he believes to be the best love and his ambivalence in desiring two implacably opposed options, celibacy and sex, nearly drives him to despair.

(b) Anthony and Ponticianus

A second exemplar of conversion is given to Augustine in the story of Anthony. It comes by way of an unexpected visit to Augustine from Ponticianus, a fellow African and a Christian holding high office at court. Ponticianus recounts the story of Anthony, a monk from Egypt, who renounced all worldly attachments to devote himself to God, and tells Augustine and Nebridius about the spread of monasticism even as far as Milan. A friend of Ponticianus' had been so inspired by Anthony's example that he renounced a successful worldly life to become a Christian. This conversion is one of the

²⁵⁷ *Confessions*, VIII, 4. 9, p. 138. (CCSL 27. 119). "Quanto igitur gratius cogitabatur Victorini pectus, quod tamquam inexpugnabile receptaculum diabolus obtinuerat..."

heart, for as Augustine recounts, Ponticianus' friend, with "the turbulent hesitations of his heart" overcome by his reading of the exploits of Anthony, the nameless friend is "set on fire" with "holy love" (the Holy Spirit), and "fixed his heart on heaven" unlike Ponticianus and the others who left with "their hearts dragging along the ground."²⁵⁸ The example of Ponticianus' friend, whose life parallels Augustine's in many respects, foreshadows Augustine's own final conversion. That story of a devout conversion is the moment of truth for Augustine. He finds himself with no remaining intellectual excuses to postpone conversion for another minute, and yet he still hesitates. The problem is his recalcitrant heart.

1.8 The Conversion of the Heart

In Book VII of the *Confessions*, the struggle to surrender his will to God's will is one that takes Augustine to the edge of psychological collapse, such is his ambivalent heart.²⁵⁹ Before conversion, after studying Paul's letters, "the writings of your Spirit,"²⁶⁰ he knew intellectually the main tenets of the Christian faith and subscribed to them: "Your words stuck fast in my heart and on all sides I was defended by you."²⁶¹ He has already come to love the humility of Christ the redeemer through his reading of the Scriptures, but had been unable to retain the stability of commitment because of the turbulence of his desires and the habitual inclination to pursue those desires.²⁶² His love for God was half-hearted. As Augustine hovers on the brink of conversion he accepts that more knowledge is not the answer to his predicament. He expresses astonishment that reason plays so little part in his ability to surrender his will to God's will, lamenting to Alypius that "Uneducated people are rising up and capturing heaven and we with our high culture without any heart-see where we roll in the mud of flesh and blood."²⁶³

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, VIII, 6. 13-15, pp. 142-144.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, VII 1.1, p. 133. "I was attracted to the way, the Saviour himself, but was still reluctant to go along its narrow paths."

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, VII. 21. 27, p. 130.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, VIII. 1. 1, p. 132.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 133.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, VIII. 8. 19, p. 146. (CCSL, 27, 125). "Surgunt indocti et caelum rapiunt, et nos cum doctrinis nostris sine corde ecce ubi uolutamur in carne et sanguine!"

Augustine was to attribute his indecision to a divided will and a wrongly inclined heart, the very reasons that Edwards was to put forward in his analysis of the conversion of the heart.²⁶⁴

After much prevarication and spiritual agony, (*grandi rixa interioris domus meae*),²⁶⁵ as happened to Edwards, it is a verse of Scripture that speaks to Augustine's heart at the climactic moment. Finally he realizes that conversion is dependent upon the mediatorial role of Jesus Christ in salvation who in loving humility suffers for the redemption of the proud. He takes up the Bible, reads Romans 13: 13-14, and metaphorically speaking, "puts on the Lord Jesus Christ."²⁶⁶ Considering Augustine's love for the Platonists and his previous mystical experiences recounted in Book VII, it is surprising that his moment of conversion comes through reading a text, not in an ecstatic vision or in the light of an eternal truth above the mind.²⁶⁷ As detailed above, Edwards finally experienced a similar epiphany after reading a text when he too had known earlier ecstatic encounters with the divine which did not give him the assurance he craved.

In both conversion experiences, in an unfathomable way the reading of a decisive text of Scripture spoke to the heart and transformed the will. All aspects of the inner life are at play here. Augustine is aware that in spiritual terms, Christ has entered his heart in the person of the Holy Spirit and given him the faith to believe the words he has just read. With this intuitive grasp of God's love, he submits his whole heart to the lordship of Christ, acknowledging that it is a work of grace instigated and effected by God. Augustine's final epiphany in the garden in Milan takes place in "the intimate chamber of my heart."²⁶⁸ It is the conversion of his heart in its Hebraic totality of mind, affection and will. It is unmistakably Trinitarian in nature. Only with surrender to a sovereign God who graciously shows mercy does his prodigal heart become "an organ of illumination."²⁶⁹

As in Edwards' experience of conversion, the final change of heart from unbelief to faith is instantaneous. The infusion of grace in the heart reintegrates his inner life and confers an immediate peace. All doubts are dispelled and he begins preparations for a new

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, VIII. 8. 19 -VIII. 11. 27, pp.146-152. This insight will be examined in Chapter Three

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, VIII. 8. 19, p. 146. (CCSL 27, 125).

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, VIII. 12. 29, (CCSL 27, 131). "sed induite dominum Iesum Christum..."

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, VII. 10. 16.; VII. 17. 23, p. 127.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, VIII. 8. 19, p. 146. (CCSL 27, 125), "cum anima mea in cubiculo nostro, corde meo,..."

²⁶⁹ James Wetzel, "Augustine: Prodigal Heart," Unpublished paper for the *Oxford Handbook on Religion and the Emotions*, obtained courtesy of the author at Villanova University, October, 2006.

life “with my heart already fully determined upon your service.”²⁷⁰ From his new perspective of the heart he praises God that “you pierced my heart with the arrow of your love”²⁷¹ confessing that the example of those others who had been converted was an encouragement and inspiration in his own case. Writing from the standpoint of one who has experienced the change of heart that conversion signifies, Augustine likens the difference between his unbelieving heart and his converted heart as that of a heart which was formerly a desert but now has God as the “lord of your land, which is my heart.”²⁷²

Augustine’s conversion is accompanied by joy, an emotion that he, in keeping with Edwards, associates with the divine beauty and happiness.²⁷³ It is far more than could be expected were it simply a matter of intellectual assent to the truths of religion. Beyond all of his learning and intellectual acumen, conversion for Augustine is primarily an aesthetic experience, as indeed it was for Edwards, tending in its crucial articulation as one scholar has put it “from a lower aesthetic to a higher.”²⁷⁴ To Augustine the most amazing aspect of conversion is the reality of the heart’s communion with the triune God of love.

Just as Edwards waxes lyrical on his new sense of the sweetness of God in the heart, so too does Augustine. Their aesthetic sensibilities show a marked similarity when it comes to the “sweetness” of the changed heart. Immediately after his conversion in Milan, Augustine attempts to describe the indescribable, the presence of God in the heart. One love is replaced by another and the new love is known by its sweetness.

Suddenly it had become sweet to me to be without the sweets of folly. What I had once feared to lose was now a delight to dismiss. You turned them out and entered to take their place, pleasanter than any pleasure but not to flesh and blood, brighter than all light yet more inward than any secret recess, higher than any honour but not to those who think themselves sublime.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁰ *Confessions*, IX. 2. 4, p. 157. See also VIII. 12.30, pp. 153-154. “The effect of your converting me to yourself,” he writes, “is that I did not now seek a wife and had no ambition for success in this world.”

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, IX. 1. 3, p. 156. (CCSL 27, 134). “Sagittaueras tu cor nostrum caritate tua...”

²⁷² *Ibid.*, II. 3. 5, p. 26. (CCSL, 27. 20). “dummodo essem disertus uel desertus potius a cultura tua, deus, qui es unus uerus et bonus dominus agri tui cordis mei.”

²⁷³ “*Psalm 5. 16.*,” in *WSA*, 111/15, p. 101. “But let all who hope in you rejoice, that is, of course, those to whom the taste of the Lord is sweet... That, then, will be the eternal rejoicing, when the just are the temple of God and he dwelling in them will be their joy.” Edwards, “Concerning the End for which God created the World,” in *Ethical Writings, Works*, 8, p. 528. “And the communication of God’s joy and happiness consists chiefly in communicating to the creature that happiness and joy.”

²⁷⁴ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, Vol. II, *Studies in Theological Style: Clerical Styles*, trans. Andrew Louth, Francis McDonagh and Brian McNeil, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1984), p. 95.

²⁷⁵ *Confessions*, IX. 1. 1, p. 155.

The essence of true conversion lay in the heart and could be known empirically by the sense of “sweetness” that at times filled the heart of the converted Augustine. There are many references to God’s sweetness or to his own sense of sweetness in the heart when he meditates on God’s love and mercy.²⁷⁶ It is this sweetness that draws the believer’s heart on in the spiritual pilgrimage that is the life of faith. One of his sermons likens the experience of conversion with that of a thirsty deer drawn by the remembrance of water to its source. Just as the thirsty deer remembers the “sweetness of the sound” that has attracted it to the source of water, so believers are drawn towards God’s church by “a kind of sweetness,” a secret indescribable pleasure that lures them on until eventually they reach God himself.²⁷⁷

In the *Confessions*, looking back to the time of his baptism at Easter in 387 some six months after his conversion, he marvels at the change in his heart. Meditation on the wonder of his renewed heart finds a ready confirmation in the Psalms, which as he rejoices “began to be my delight.” Reading Psalm 4:7 brought “gladness to my heart.”²⁷⁸ Affection and intellect unite in a powerful experience of emotional enchantment that is also manifest in his understanding as the truth was “distilled in my heart.”

During those days I found an insatiable and amazing delight in considering the profundity of your purpose for the salvation of the human race. How I wept during your hymns and songs! I was deeply moved by the music of the sweet chants of your Church. The sounds flowed into my ears and the truth was distilled into my heart. This caused the feelings of devotion to overflow. Tears ran, and it was good for me to have that experience.²⁷⁹

Alongside the sweetness that comes with conversion, there is regret that the giving of his heart to God has taken so long. Augustine, full of contrition, blames himself entirely for the protracted nature of his journey to faith in the triune God.²⁸⁰

Conversion signifies the watershed of Augustine’s spiritual journey with his life from that time onwards wholly given over to God. At the time of writing the *Confessions*, however, not everyone was convinced that there had been the comprehensive change of heart that Augustine claimed. At one stage during the composition of the *Confessions*,

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, I. 4. 4, p. 5, “my God, my life, my holy sweetness,” I. 6. 9, p. 7; I. 15. 24, p. 17; I. 20. 31., p. 23; IV. 5. 10, p. 58, VII. 20.26 p. 130; VIII. 4. 9 p. 138.

²⁷⁷ “Psalm 41.9,” in *WSA*, III/16, p. 246.

²⁷⁸ *Confessions*, IX. 5. 10., p. 162.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, IX. 6. 14, p. 164.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, X. 27. 38, p. 201. “Late have I loved you, beauty so old and so new: late have I loved you.” (CCSL 27, p. 175). “Sero te amaui, pulchritudo tam antiqua et tam noua, sero te amaui!”

Augustine was engaged in polemic with the Donatist Primate of Carthage Primian, who launched a spiteful attack on him when it seemed clear that Augustine had outmaneuvered him in debate. In his third discourse on Psalm Thirty-six, Augustine freely admits that his pre-conversion life was disgraceful, but urges his congregation to trust that “whatever I was, in Christ’s name that is all over.”²⁸¹ Mindful of his many failings, he insists that God, who alone knows the “travail of my heart,” will testify to the sincerity of his conversion and that in fact, his enemies must know that when he left Carthage for Rome in 384, “we were one man when we went away, and another when we returned.”²⁸²

Augustine becomes a new man when converted and is happy to attribute it to a dependence on God’s grace because it is the grace of God which convinces him of his weakness.²⁸³ It is an amazing thing for Augustine that God bothers with such a paltry creature even when that creature is made in the image of God, but he has the testimony of his own converted heart to verify his claim that God has “melted my sins away like ice.”²⁸⁴ His fervent prayer is the God will call other sinners to a change of heart. Nothing is required but the desire for repentance. “Let them turn and seek you, for you have not abandoned your creation as they have deserted their Creator. Let them turn, and at once you are there in their heart-in the heart of those who make confession to you and throw themselves upon you and weep on your breast after travelling many rough paths.”²⁸⁵

The Christian life is a life of loving communion between the immutable God and a very mutable creature whose only task is to respond to the divine initiative of love and mercy. Augustine’s discovery that this could only be confirmed in the heart reveal him as one who owed more to the Hebrew psalmists than the Neoplatonists. As Augustine’s life as a Bishop unfolds, he begs God to reveal his faults so that he can ask his brothers to pray for the wounds that he knows he will discover in himself in the light of God’s revelation through Scripture and experience.²⁸⁶ Whatever and however many his failings however, Augustine is convinced that God’s example of love in Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit who is Christ’s love in his heart has not only brought him from darkness to light in the act

²⁸¹ “Psalm 36. 19,” (3), in *WSA*, 111/16, pp. 143-144.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 144.

²⁸³ *Confessions*, X. 3. 4, p. 180.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, II. 7. 15, p. 32. (CCSL. 27, 25). “quod peccata mea tamquam glaciem soluisti.”

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, V. 2, 2, p. 73. (CCSL, 27, 57-58). “Conuertantur ergo et quaerant te, quia non, sicut ipsi deseruerunt creatorem suum, ita tu deseruisti creaturam tuam. Ipsi conuertantur, et ecce ibi es in corde eorum, in corde contentium tibi et proicientium se in te et plorantium in sinu tuo post uias suas difficiles.”

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, X. 37. 62, p. 216.

of conversion, but is sufficient to save him from despair over his ongoing sins and shortcomings.²⁸⁷ "The Word himself cries to you to return. There is the place of undisturbed quietness where love is not deserted if it does not itself depart."²⁸⁸

Given the continuing tendency to self-love even in the converted heart, Augustine's joy and delight in his new status is circumscribed. Healing the wounded heart is synonymous with conversion, but like conversion it is not a once for all event but a life's work of repentance, faith and perseverance. Augustine has tasted God, but as with Edwards' post conversion experience of the day to day trials of the beleaguered pilgrim, Augustine's hunger and thirst for God is not assuaged. Instead he is filled with longing for rest that he concludes is only to be found in heaven. Mindful of the precarious nature of his heart even after conversion, he confesses that because he is not full of God, he is still a "burden to himself."²⁸⁹ Conversion is identifiable both in a discrete moment of self-surrender and as a lifelong affair of the heart which is ever in danger of seduction by the attractions of the senses which manipulate the heart to pursue lesser loves. Only the grace of God ensures that the final destination of seeing God in heaven is reached. Augustine is confident that God will eventually cure "all the sicknesses of my soul"²⁹⁰ but as he knows God's light of love in his heart exposes all his weaknesses filling him simultaneously with "terror and burning love."²⁹¹ He takes comfort and reassures his congregation that eventually "If we pay attention to God, if we hold out ourselves with all our hearts for treatment, we shall be all healed."²⁹² Edwards too knew well the ambivalence and longing of the converted heart.

There are echoes of Augustine's sense of the perpetual woundedness of the heart in this life in Edwards' later works. After conversion, the Christian life is depicted as a pilgrimage through the wilderness with hope and longing more characteristic of the redeemed heart than tranquility, although joy is not absent from either heart. Augustine's longing to know more of God in his heart is a recurrent theme and appears in Book I of the Confessions, where with all the impetuous fervour of the inebriate, he pleads with God to fill his heart with love and so overcome his propensity to falter on the way to the beatific

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, X. 43. 70, p. 220.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, IV. 11. 16, p. 62.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, X. 28. 39, p. 202.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, X. 30. 42, p. 203.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, XI. 9. 11, p. 227.

²⁹² "Sermon 32.1," in *WSA*, III/2, p.137. (CCSL 41, 398.)

vision of heaven. “Who will grant it that you come into my heart and intoxicate it” he cries out, “so that I forget my evils and embrace my one and only good, yourself?”²⁹³ This is said from his post-conversion experience and highlights the precarious nature of assurance. Intermittent experiences of intoxication with the sweetness of God’s love after conversion create a deeper longing for a more lasting spiritual vision of God that will sustain him for the rest of his life.

The problem of the longing heart is attributed to the weight of Augustine’s love. In his world everything has its own weight. When all things are rightly ordered, they are at rest. As a fallen creature before conversion the weight of Augustine’s loves carried his heart wherever the love was inclined, usually downwards away from God. The gift of the Holy Spirit in the heart saves him from the “precipitous abyss” of sin. After his conversion, Augustine’s loves are now governed by “the lifting up of love given by your Spirit” who is his rest, his joy and his peace. The divine holiness of the Trinity draws the heart upwards so that believers “may lift up our heart and hold it to you.”²⁹⁴ The Holy Spirit is the bearer of new life in the heart. Augustine acknowledges that what healing he does find comes only after “our heart conceived through your Spirit.”²⁹⁵ Healing the wounded heart begins with conversion, but unless God calls the sinner to repentance, and that is a work of grace in the heart, it is impossible for the sinner to return to God.²⁹⁶ Augustine never tires of reminding his congregations of the need for humility and their dependence on God’s mercy for the change of heart that is the premise for conversion.²⁹⁷

1.9 Summary

The comparison above has shown some remarkable similarities in Edwards’ and Augustine’s understanding of conversion.

²⁹³ *Confessions*, I, 5. 5, p. 5. (CCSL, 27, 3). “Quis mihi dabit adquiescere in te? Quis dabit mihi, ut uenias in cor meum et inebries illud, ut obliuiscar mala mea et unum bonum meum amplectar, te?”

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, XIII. 7. 8 - XIII. 10.11, pp. 277-279.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, XIII. 38. 53, p. 304. (CCSL 27, 272). “posteaquam concepit de spiritu tuo cor nostrum.”

²⁹⁶ Jose Oroz Reta, “Conversion,” in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed., Allan Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 239-242. In pagan philosophy, conversion is a return of the soul to itself in order to be transformed into the “One” as in Plotinus, but in the Christian theology of late antiquity, conversion is a return to God in and through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. In this latter instance, conversion may involve the return of the soul to itself, but only as a means of returning to God. It presupposes an abandonment of God through sin and an inability to return of one’s own volition.

²⁹⁷ “Psalms, 84. 8,” in *WSA*, 111/18, pp. 209-210. “What have you done, O man, that you should be converted to God and deserve his mercy? What could you have done to be converted if you were not called by God? Do not become, therefore, proud about your conversion, because if he had not called you when you fled from him, you would not have converted.”

First, conversion involves nothing less than a complete re-ordering of the inner life in which the heart dominated by hubris becomes a humbled, renewed heart in-dwelt by the divine Trinitarian love and united to God by that same love.

Second, this shift in perspective involves the affections of the heart and the understanding of the intellect uniting in recognition of the loveliness, holiness and beauty of God. Intellectual assent to the notion of God as architect of the universe is replaced by a belief that conversion marks the initiation of a loving, intimate relationship of the heart and the triune God of the Bible, much like that of the marriage bond. The person of Jesus Christ is vital to their understanding of conversion since he is the mediator who bridges the gap between God and sinful humanity.

Third, the crux of the difficulties experienced by Edwards and Augustine before conversion was the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, a doctrine that seemed to be intrinsically unfair. Both insist that it is only God who can affect the changed disposition of the heart from love of self to love of God which conversion signifies, and both attribute their difficulties with this doctrine to pride, the pre-eminent stance of the sinful heart. Submission to God's gracious love paved the way for their final conversion experiences.

Fourth, this spiritual unity provides the impetus for a new sense of vocation in their lives. The working out of the implications of conversion becomes their life's work.

Fifth, conversion does not confer a smooth passage for the heart in the journey of faith. Their firm belief that conversion unites the believer's heart with Christ is a theological truth that has to be worked out experientially in the Christian life. There are hints of a shared Platonic view of the heart on pilgrimage through the wilderness of this world, with the only consolation being that the destination is guaranteed by God's sovereignty in preordaining their participation in the divine Trinitarian love.

Having established the primacy of the heart in Edwards' and Augustine's religious psychology as evidenced in their conversion narratives, Chapter Two explores their understanding of the nature of the Trinity in its immanent and economic manifestations as related to the connection between the heart and the spiritual life.